The KINGS TREASURIES
OF LITERATURE



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WILLIAM HAZLITT

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# ESSAYS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT



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# INTRODUCTION

WILLIAM HAZLITT was born at Maidstone, 10th April, 1778. His father was a Unitarian minister of Irish birth and descent; his mother, the daughter of a Wisbech ironmonger.

The child's early life was sufficiently varied, as, in 1780, the family moved to Bandon, near Cork, and in 1783, to America. Travel, especially in another continent, is usually an enlarging experience, and it is disappointing to find that the three years spent in America seem to have left no impression on Hazlitt.

The family returned to England in 1787 and settled at Wem, in Shropshire Young Hazlitt was sent to a local day-school, but his education was mainly directed by his father, a fine type of Nonconformist, intelligent, upright, and unworldly. He was an indulgent and sympathetic parent, from whom William inherited a passionate love of truth, and of liberty. According to his sister, Hazlitt was a lively, lovable child, the pride of his family; but at an early age, over-sensitiveness froze him, and, for the rest of his life, he remained shy, brooding, resentful. He must have been a precocious boy, busy with abstruse speculations, as, when only fourteen years old, he had written *A Project of a New Theory of Criminal and Civil Legislation*

At fifteen, young Hazlitt was sent to a Unitarian college at Hackney. His experiences there confirmed him in his aversion to his father's calling, the more so as he was interested in art, which his elder brother John, a pupil of Reynolds, practised professionally in London

In 1794 his father regretfully withdrew him from the

college, and he returned to Wem, where he lived for eight years, following no particular occupation. He spent his time walking about the country, pursuing various studies, and occasionally staying in London with his brother John, whose studio was frequented by several interesting people. Such society appears to have affected Hazlitt very little at this period, if we can believe his statement that he remained "inarticulate, brutish, and helpless."

All this was changed in January, 1798, when he heard Coleridge preach in the Unitarian Chapel at Shrewsbury. The great man "whose voice was far above singing," shortly afterwards visited the Hazlitts at Wem. William was extraordinarily fascinated by the poet-philosopher, who took an interest in his young admirer, encouraged him to persevere in the study of metaphysics, and invited him to Nether Stowey, where he was introduced to Wordsworth. From this period, Hazlitt, with some exaggeration, dated his spiritual birth and his love of books. He is but one of many who were carried away by the charm of Coleridge's personality.

Nevertheless, Hazlitt seems to have been still unaware that literature was his real vocation, for in 1802-3, under brother John's direction, he studied art, and spent four rapturous months in Paris, copying the great masters. On his return, he wandered on foot about England for three years, painting portraits at five guineas each. He had considerable skill in hitting off a likeness; one of his works, now in the National Portrait Gallery, is a lively presentment of Charles Lamb, dressed, somewhat incongruously, as a Venetian senator. Unfortunately, though he possessed artistic talent, Hazlitt had not the application necessary to

acquire high technical excellence. A fastidious and severe critic, he decided that he was lacking in creative imagination, and abandoned painting as a career. The time had not been wasted; it had quickened his artistic perception and enlarged his mental outlook.

He now applied himself to various branches of study. In 1805 he produced his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*; and, in 1806, *Free Thoughts on Public Affairs*. The word "free" sounds a brave, defiant note—the challenge of a young revolutionist.

In 1807 came the *Abridgment of Abraham Tucker's "Light of Nature,"* the *Eloquence of the British Senate*, and the *Reply to Malthus*, the first work in which we detect Hazlitt's characteristic style. These books brought him little money, and notoriety rather than fame.

By this time, his circle of acquaintances included several illustrious people, such as the Godwins, the Wollstonecrafts, the Burneys, the Lambs. In 1808, he married Sarah Stoddard, and settled at Winterslow, near Salisbury, in a cottage belonging to his wife Here William spent the first few months of marriage in the singular occupation of compiling *A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue*, and also studied philosophy. He soon found that the good old leisurely days, when the hospitality of his father, or brother, had enabled him to enjoy a life of leisure, were over for one who had to support a family In 1812, financial reasons induced him to come to London, where he settled at 19, York Street, Westminster. The site is now covered by Queen Anne Mansions

The future was not bright; Hazlitt was thirty-five years old, moody, uncouth, and, so far, little known to the public.

Fortune stood by him, as, to some extent, it did

throughout life, for although Hazlitt never earned more than a fair living, he at no time suffered from the privations that some greater writers have undergone. Besides occasional work as a lecturer, he obtained regular employment, at four pounds a week, as one of the reporters to the House of Commons. At this period he formed the habit of drinking enormous quantities of tea—so strong that his guests found it intolerably rank—and thus ruined his digestion.

Hazlitt presently abandoned reporting in favour of work on the *Morning Chronicle* and, a little later, on the *Examiner*, as dramatic and literary critic. His outspoken articles soon attracted notice, and made him many enemies, of whom the fiercest was the scurrilous, malignant Gifford of the *Quarterly*.

Wounded and permanently embittered by coarse attacks, which he repaid in kind, after the unsavoury fashion of the day, Hazlitt continued to write undauntedly with increasing power, and in 1817 produced *The Round Table*, essays in which, for the first time, he shows his full powers. In 1817 appeared his *Lectures on the English Poets*, originally delivered at the Surrey Institute, and also *A Letter to William Gifford*, a masterpiece of sarcasm, penned with intense subtlety, close reasoning, and a kind of cold, sustained fury.

Further, during the same year he published the *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*; in 1820, *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*; and in 1821–24, *Original Essays on Men and Manners*.

In the meantime, Hazlitt and his wife had become estranged. They separated by mutual consent, and, a few years after, the marriage was annulled under Scottish law.

To the surprise of his friends, in 1824 Hazlitt married

again. The second wife, a widow named Bridgwater, is said to have been much superior to Sarah Stoddart in

He wrote busily, and among other things, he produced, in 1825, *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits*: powerful, strongly-coloured sketches of well-known people, many of them touched in with a cartoonist's malice and wit, which often produce a more life-like effect than honest portraiture.

In spite of ill-health, Hazlitt now undertook *A Life of Napoleon*, whom, unlike most Englishmen of the time, he greatly admired. Unfortunately, he lacked the patience, the judgment, and the impartiality required of historians. He had collected his materials, and partly written the work, on previous visits to Paris, and he now again crossed the Channel to consult authorities. These were almost all anti-British. Hazlitt's public resented his attitude; the first two volumes were coldly received, and the publishers failed, so that the author lost the reward he had expected. Although indifferent to money, Hazlitt was scrupulous in paying his debts. He now found himself in serious straits, and the effort to make a living killed him. After months of suffering he died on 18th September, 1830. It is some consolation to know that Charles Lamb was at the bedside, and that the end was painless His mind was unclouded, and there is a touching, characteristic bravery, a certain "grand style," in his last recorded words: "Well, I have had a happy life!"

On 23rd September, at five in the afternoon, he was buried in the churchyard of St. Anne's, Soho.

Dying men usually speak the truth; despite the trouble that his passions, his sensitiveness, and his violent temper had brought on him, Hazlitt enjoyed this world.

Like Pepys, he was in love with life in all its aspects, from prize-fighting, crime, and passion, to literature, art, philosophy, and all intellectual speculation, save religious problems, to which he was indifferent.

Curiosity, rather than affection, led him to make many acquaintances, but he had few, if any, real friends, for like all sentimentalists, he was incapable of deep and lasting attachments. He was not generally popular. Even those, and they were many, who found him delightful company, seem to have mistrusted him, not altogether without cause, as one who might turn on them and rend them behind their backs. Like many sensitive and original minds, whose peculiarities render them unpopular, Hazlitt, from early childhood, was tormented by a brooding, resentful desire for the favour of his associates. He often declares, with bitterness, that women were repelled by him, and in one essay complains, somewhat morbidly and shrilly, of being an object of derision and dislike to servants.

His nature was rich in contrasts; though he liked company, he was never happier than when alone in the solitude of Salisbury Plain; he appreciated good living, yet was abstemious in daily life.

Always a very keen observer, his retentive memory recalled long past incidents with astonishing vividness and detail.

No man was more free from the prevailing snobbishness of his time, and few have had a higher conception of, or a greater passion for all liberty of thought and action.

The past attracted him more than the present; he had

[illegible] even by a particular style. When he resented criticism, it was the malice, rather than the opinion of the critic, that irritated him.

Hazlitt's style is modelled, sometimes to the verge of imitation, on [illegible] of the seventee [illegible] movement and [illegible]

Though he h [illegible] discursive pen, it is the idea, rather than the language, that is nimble; he never attained the ease of some writers. Still, it is probable that he exaggerated when he said that he acquired skill only by long and laborious practice.

Many of his faults are, doubtless, due to the fact that the bulk of his work was written for the papers, frequently under the pressure of necessity. It shows, only too often, the weakness of such writings, though it is journalism of a superior kind. His chief defects are, an excessive use of quotations, his material point of view, and the violence of his prejudices, sometimes almost ludicrous, as where he deals with the French and their ways

He has neither the whimsical and subtle charm of the best of Lamb, nor the sonorous cadence of De Quincey's noblest passages, nor the limpidity of some other writers, but he excels in vigour and directness.

It has been said of him that, as a critic, he was grudging of praise for his contemporaries. This is partly

explained by the fact that his mind was retrospective, and worshipped the great dead, so that on their behalf he was jealous of the claims, often none too modest, made by writers of his time. Who can wonder if his stern critical honesty was irritated by such self-sufficiency as Wordsworth, among others, displayed? Apart from this, for many years Hazlitt was tormented by severe indigestion; and he is not the only author who shows traces of a dyspeptic's irritability. If Hazlitt sneered, Carlyle inveighed. Moreover, as a journalist, writing for a livelihood, he was often compelled to submit to "editing," so that now it is often impossible to determine how far his written judgments correspond to his real opinions.

In the main, his verdicts are sound, but at times, as in his estimate of Shelley's work, he shows deplorable incapacity. With regard to the classics, his criticism, though less penetrative than that of Lamb and Coleridge, is more reasoned, solid, and scientific.

Shrewd, cynical, detached, jaundiced, he saw life as an interesting spectacle, and his fellows as actors, whom he, as a spectator, had a right to criticise. A mocking spirit, yet full of reverence for high things, there was in the man a kind of fierce honesty that would not allow him to flatter even himself. Intellectually, he was rather short-winded; he does not often run an idea to earth, but the pace is very hot while it lasts.

His range of interests is reflected in his writings. Not many have achieved such varied triumphs as the vivid picture of *The Fight*; the majestic, haughty *Fear of Death*, the finest original prose cadence Hazlitt ever contrived; or the *Pleasures of Painting* with its simple grace, melody, and a certain haunting wistfulness engendered by the remembrance of failure.

Hazlitt, the man, violent, of full appetites, cynical, over-sensitive, disillusioned, could express himself with the most pungent vigour and malice; but Hazlitt, the virtuoso of the beautiful, approached the noble things of life like a lover, and discoursed on them in the language of Love.

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# ESSAYS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

## MERRY ENGLAND

St. George for merry England!

THIS old-fashioned epithet might be supposed to have been bestowed ironically, or on the old principle — *Ut lucus a non lucendo*. Yet there is something in the sound that hits the fancy, and a sort of truth beyond appearances. To be sure, it is from a dull, homely ground that the gleams of mirth and jollity break out; but the streaks of light that tinge the evening sky are not the less striking on that account. The beams of the morning sun shining on the lonely glades, or through the idle branches of the tangled forest, the leisure, the freedom, "the pleasure of going and coming without knowing where," the troops of wild deer, the sports of the chase, and other rustic gambols, were sufficient to justify the well-known appellation of "Merry Sherwood," and in like manner, we may apply the phrase to Merry England. The smile is not the less sincere because it does not always play upon the cheek, and the jest is not the less welcome, nor the laugh less hearty, because they happen to be a relief from care or leaden-eyed melancholy. The instances are the more precious as they are rare, and

*Ut lucus a non lucendo i.e.* erroneously. An allusion to an ancient, and incorrect, piece of etymology "As lucus (a grove) is so called because there is no light in it

we look forward to them with the greater good will, or back upon them with the greater gratitude, as we drain the last drop in the cup with particular relish. If not always gay or in good spirits, we are glad when any occasion draws us out of our natural gloom, and disposed to make the most of it. We may say with Silence in the play, "I have been merry once ere now,"—and this once was to serve him all his life; for he was a person of wonderful silence and gravity, though "he chirped over his cups," and announced with characteristic glee that "there were pippins and cheese to come." Silence was in this sense a merry man; that is, he would be merry if he could, and a very great economy of wit, like very slender fare, was a banquet to him, from the simplicity of his taste and habits. "Continents," says Hobbes, "have most of what they contain"—and in this view it may be contended that the English are the merriest people in the world, since they only show it on high-days and holidays. They are then like a school-boy let loose from school, or like a dog that has slipped his collar. They are not gay like the French, who are one eternal smile of self-complacency, tortured into affectation, or spun into languid indifference, nor are they voluptuous and immersed in sensual indolence, like the Italians; but they have that sort of intermittent, fitful, irregular gaiety, which is neither worn out by habit, nor deadened by passion, but is sought with avidity as it takes the mind by surprise, is startled by a sense of oddity and incongruity, indulges its wayward humours or lively impulses, with perfect freedom and lightness of heart, and seizes occasion by the forelock, that it may return to serious business with more cheerfulness, and have something to beguile the hours of thought or sadness. I do not see how there can be

high spirits without low ones; and everything has its price according to circumstances. Perhaps we have to pay a heavier tax on pleasure than some others: what skills it, so long as our good spirits and good hearts enable us to bear it?

"They" (the English), says Froissart, "amused themselves sadly after the fashion of their country"—*ils se rejouissoient tristement selon la coutume de leur pays* They have indeed a way of their own Their mirth is a relaxation from gravity, a challenge to dull care to be gone; and one is not always clear at first, whether the appeal is successful. The cloud may still hang on the brow; the ice may not thaw at once To help them out in their new character is an act of charity Anything short of hanging or drowning is something to begin with. They do not enter into their amusements the less doggedly because they may plague others They like a thing the better for hitting them a rap on the knuckles, for making their blood tingle They do not dance or sing, but they make good cheer—"eat, drink, and are merry." No people are fonder of field-sports, Christmas gambols, or practical jests Blindman's-buff, hunt-the-slipper, hot-cockles, and snap-dragon, are all approved English games, full of laughable surprises and "hair-breadth 'scapes," and serve to amuse the winter fire-side after the roast-beef and plum-pudding, the spiced ale and roasted crab, thrown (hissing-hot) into the foaming tankard. Punch (not the liquor, but the puppet) is not, I fear, of English origin; but there is no place, I take it, where he finds himself more at home or meets a more

*Hot-cockles* An old-fashioned game in which one player covered his eyes, and tried to guess which of the others touched him.

joyous welcome, where he collects greater crowds at the corners of streets, where he opens the eyes or distends the cheeks wider, or where the bangs and blows, the uncouth gestures, ridiculous anger and screaming voice of the chief performer excite more boundless merriment or louder bursts of laughter among all ranks and sorts of people. An English theatre is the very throne of pantomime; nor do I believe that the gallery and boxes of Drury Lane or Covent Garden filled on the proper occasions with holiday folks (big or little) yield the palm for undisguised, tumultuous, inextinguishable laughter to any spot in Europe. I do not speak of the refinement of the mirth (this is no fastidious speculation) but of its cordiality, on the return of these long looked-for and licensed periods; and I may add here, by way of illustration, that the English common people are a sort of grown children, spoiled and sulky perhaps, but full of glee and merriment, when their attention is drawn off by some sudden and striking object. The May-pole is almost gone out of fashion among us: but May Day, besides its flowering hawthorns and its pearly dews, has still its boasted exhibition of painted chimney-sweepers and their Jack-o'-the-Green, whose tawdry finery, bedizened faces, unwonted gestures, and short-lived pleasures call forth good-humoured smiles and looks of sympathy in the spectators. There is no place where trap-ball, fives, prison-base, football, quoits, bowls are better understood or more successfully practised; and the very names of a cricket bat and ball make English fingers tingle. What happy days must

*Jack-o'-the-Green.* One of the sweeps who, on May Day, used to walk in procession, surrounded by a portable screen of green boughs.

"Long Robinson" have passed in getting ready his wickets and mending his bats, who when two of the fingers of his right-hand were struck off by the violence of a ball, had a screw fastened to it to hold the bat, and with the other hand still sent the ball thundering against the boards that bounded *Old Lord's Cricket-ground*! What delightful hours must have been his in looking forward to the matches that were to come, in recounting the feats he had performed in those that

cock-fighting are almost the peculiar diversions of this island, and often objected to us as barbarous and cruel; horse-racing is the delight and the ruin of numbers, and the noble science of boxing is all our own Foreigners can scarcely understand how we can squeeze pleasure out of this pastime; the luxury of hard blows given or received; the joy of the ring, nor the perseverance of the combatants.[1] The English also excel, or are not

[1] "The gentle and free passage of arms at Ashby" was, we are told, so called by the Chroniclers of the time, on account of the feats of horsemanship and the quantity of knightly blood that

excelled, in wiring a hare, in stalking a deer, in shooting, fishing, and hunting. England to this day boasts her Robin Hood and his merry men, that stout archer and outlaw, and patron-saint of the sporting-calendar. What a cheerful sound is that of the hunters, issuing from the autumnal wood and sweeping over hill and dale!

——A cry more tuneable
Was never halloo'd to by hound or horn.

What sparkling richness in the scarlet coats of the riders, what a glittering confusion in the pack, what spirit in the horses, what eagerness in the followers on foot, as they disperse over the plain, or force their way over hedge and ditch! Surely, the coloured prints and pictures of these, hung up in gentlemen's halls and village ale-houses, however humble as works of art, have more life and health and spirit in them, and mark the pith and nerve of the national character more creditably than the mawkish, sentimental, affected designs of Theseus and Pirithous, and Æneas and Dido, pasted on

are led to the attack or sustain it equally well, because they fight as they box, not out of malice, but to show *pluck* and manhood. *Fair play and old England for ever!* This is the only bravery that will stand the test. There is the same determination and spirit shown in resistance as in attack; but not the same pleasure in getting a cut with a sabre as in giving one. There is, therefore, always a certain degree of effeminacy mixed up with any approach to cruelty, since both have their source in the same principle, viz., an over-valuing of pain. This was the reason the French (having the best cause and the best general in the world) ran away at Waterloo, because they were inflamed, furious, drunk with the blood of their enemies, but when it came to their turn, wanting the same stimulus, they were panic-struck, and their hearts and their senses failed them all at once.

Vanity is the same half-witted principle, compared with pride. It leaves men in the lurch when it is most needed; is mortified at being reduced to stand on the defensive, and relinquishes the field to its more surly antagonist.

persons, whose existence consisted wholly in manual exercises, and all whose enjoyments lay at their finger-ends. Their greatest happiness was in cutting a stick, in mending a cabbage-net, in digging a hole in the ground, in hitting a mark, turning a lathe, or in something else of the same kind, at which they had a certain *knack*. Well is it when we can amuse ourselves with such trifles and without injury to others! This class of character, which the *Spectator* has immortalised in the person of Will Wimble, is still common among younger brothers and gentlemen of retired incomes in town or country. The *Cockney* character is of our English growth, as this intimates a feverish fidgety delight in rural sights and sounds, and a longing wish, after the turmoil and confinement of a city-life, to transport one's-self to the freedom and breathing sweetness of a country retreat. London is half suburbs. The suburbs of Paris are a desert; and you see nothing but crazy wind-mills, stone-walls, and a few straggling visitants in spots where in England you would find a thousand villas, a thousand terraces crowned with their own delights, or be stunned with the noise of bowling-greens and tea-gardens, or stifled with the fumes of tobacco mingling with fragrant shrubs, or the clouds of dust raised by half the population of the metropolis panting and toiling in search of a mouthful of fresh air. The Parisian is, perhaps, as well (or better) contented with himself wherever he is, stewed in his shop or his garret; the Londoner is miserable in these circumstances, and glad to escape from them.[1] Let no one object to the gloomy appearance of a London Sunday, compared with a Parisian one. It is a part of our politics and our religion: we would not have James

[1] The English are fond of change of scene; the French of change of posture; the Italians like to sit still and do nothing.

the First's *Book of Sports* thrust down our throats: and besides, it is a part of our character to do one thing at a time, and not to be dancing a jig and on our knees in the same breath. It is true the Englishman spends his Sunday evening at the ale-house—

——And e'en on Sunday
Drank with Kirton Jean till Monday—

but he only unbends and waxes mellow by degrees, and sits soaking till he can neither sit, stand, nor go: it is his vice, and a beastly one it is, but not a proof of any

Our Bartholomew-Fair is Queen Mab herself to it! What can be duller than a parcel of masks moving

have recourse to a pasteboard proxy to set off our mirth: a mask may be a very good cover for licentiousness (though of that I saw no signs), but it is a very bad exponent of wit and humour. I should suppose there is more drollery and unction in the caricatures in Gilray's shop-window, than in all the masks in Italy, without exception.[1]

[1] Bells are peculiar to England. They jingle them in Italy during the carnival as boys do with us at Shrovetide, but they

*James the First's "Book of Sports"* This work authorised certain recreations after divine service

*Gilray's shop-window.* Miss Humphrey's shop, 29, St. James's Street, where James Gilray lived and exhibited.

The humour of English writing and description has often been wondered at; and it flows from the same source as the merry *traits* of our character. A degree of barbarism and rusticity seems necessary to the perfection of humour. The droll and laughable depend on peculiarity and incongruity of character. But with the progress of refinement, the peculiarities of individuals and of classes wear out or lose their sharp, abrupt edges; nay, a certain slowness and dulness of understanding is required to be struck with odd and unaccountable appearances, for which a greater facility of apprehension can sooner assign an explanation that breaks the force of the seeming absurdity, and to which a wider scope of imagination is more easily reconciled. Clowns and country people are more amused, are more disposed to laugh and make sport of the dress of strangers, because from their ignorance the surprise is greater, and they cannot conceive anything to be natural or proper to which they are unused. Without a given portion of hardness and repulsiveness of feeling the ludicrous cannot well exist. Wonder, and curiosity, the attributes of inexperience, enter greatly into its composition. Now it appears to me that the English are (or were) just at that mean point between intelligence and obtuseness, which must produce the most abundant and happiest crop of humour. Absurdity and singularity glide over the French mind without jarring or jostling with it; or they evaporate in levity:—with the Italians they are lost in indolence or pleasure. The ludicrous takes hold of the English imagination, and

have no notion of ringing them. The sound of village bells never cheers you in travelling, nor have you the lute or cittern in their stead. The expression of "Merry Bells" is a favourite and not one of the least appropriate in our language.

clings to it with all its ramifications We resent any difference or peculiarity of appearance at first, and yet, having not much malice at our hearts, we are glad to turn it into a jest—we are liable to be offended, and as willing to be pleased—struck with oddity from not knowing what to make of it, we wonder and burst out a-laughing at the eccentricity of others, while we follow our own bent from wilfulness or simplicity, and thus afford them, in our turn, matter for the indulgence of the comic vein. It is possible that a greater refinement of manners may give birth to finer distinctions of satire and a nicer tact for the ridiculous: but our insular situation and character are, I should say, most likely to foster, as they have in fact fostered, the greatest quantity of natural and striking humour, in spite of our plodding tenaciousness, and want both of gaiety and quickness of perception. A set of raw recruits with their awkward movements and unbending joints are laughable enough: but they cease to be so when they have once been drilled into discipline and uniformity. So it is with nations that lose their angular points and grotesque qualities with education and intercourse: but it is in a mixed state of manners that comic humour chiefly flourishes, for, in order that the drollery may not be lost, we must have spectators of the passing scene who are able to appreciate and embody its most remarkable features,—wits as well as *butts* for ridicule. I shall mention two names in this department, which may serve to redeem the national character from absolute dulness and solemn pretence,—Fielding and

to take the jest for granted when it ought to work it out with patient and marked touches, and it ends in vapid flippancy and impertinence. Among our neighbours on the Continent, Molière and Rabelais carried the freedom of wit and humour to an almost incredible height; but they rather belonged to the old French school, and even approach and exceed the English licence and extravagance of conception. I do not consider Congreve's wit (though it belongs to us) as coming under the article here spoken of; for his genius is anything but *merry*. Lord Byron was in the habit of railing at the spirit of our good old comedy, and of abusing Shakespeare's Clowns and Fools, which he said the refinement of the French and Italian stage would not endure, and which only our grossness and puerile taste could tolerate. In this I agree with him; and it is *pat* to my purpose. I flatter myself that we are almost the only people left who understand and relish *nonsense*. We are not "merry and wise," but indulge our mirth to excess and folly. When we trifle, we trifle in good earnest; and having once relaxed our hold of the helm, drift idly down the stream, and delighted with the change are tossed about "by every little breath" of whim or caprice,

That under Heaven is blown.

All we then want is to proclaim a truce with reason, and to be pleased with as little expense of thought or pretension to wisdom as possible. This licensed fooling is carried to its very utmost length in Shakespeare, and in some other of our elder dramatists, without, perhaps, sufficient warrant or the same excuse. Nothing can justify this extreme relaxation but extreme tension. Shakespeare's trifling does indeed tread upon the very

borders of vacancy: his meaning often hangs by the very slenderest threads. For this he might be blamed if it did not take away our breath to follow his eagle flights, or if he did not at other times make the cordage of our hearts crack. After our heads ache with thinking, it is fair to play the fool. The clowns were as proper an appendage to the gravity of our antique literature, as fools and dwarfs were to the stately dignity of courts and noble houses in former days. Of all people, they have the best right to claim a total exemption from rules and rigid formality, who, when they have anything of importance to do, set about it with the greatest earnestness and perseverance, and are generally grave and sober to a proverb[1] Poor Swift, who wrote more idle or *nonsense* verses than any man, was the severest of moralists; and his feelings and observations morbidly acute. Did not Lord Byron himself follow up his Childe [illegible]

my mind equally constrained and affected, whether in relation to the pretensions of his rank or the efforts of his genius.

They ask you in France, how you pass your time in England without amusements; and can with difficulty believe that there are theatres in London, still less that they are larger and handsomer than those in Paris. That we should have comic actors, "[illegible]
them." 7
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the coun

[1] The strict formality of French serious writing is [illegible] as a foil to the natural levity of their character.

in Warwick-lane, from its resemblance to a gilded pill, has been made to represent the whole pharmacopœia and professional quackery of the kingdom. They have no more notion, for instance, how we should have such an actor as Liston on our stage, than if we were to tell them we have parts performed by a sea-otter; nor if they were to see him, would they be much the wiser, or know what to think of his unaccountable twitches of countenance or nondescript gestures, of his teeth chattering in his head, his eyes that seem dropping from their sockets, his nose that is tickled by a jest as by a feather and shining with self-complacency as if oiled, his ignorant conceit, his gaping stupor, his lumpish vivacity in Lubin Log or Tony Lumpkin; for as our rivals do not wind up the machine to such a determined intensity of purpose, neither have they any idea of its running down to such degrees of imbecility and folly, or coming to an absolute *stand-still* and lack of meaning, nor can they enter into or be amused with the contrast. No people ever laugh heartily who can give a reason for their doing so: and I believe the English in general are not yet in this predicament. They are not metaphysical, but very much in a state of nature; and this is one main ground why I give them credit for being merry, notwithstanding appearances. Their mirth is not the mirth of vice or desperation, but of innocence and a native wildness. They do not cavil or boggle at niceties, and not merely come to the edge of a joke, but break their necks over it with a wanton "Here goes," where others make a *pirouette* and stand upon decorum. The French cannot, however, be persuaded of the excellence of our comic stage, nor of the store we set by it. When they ask what amusements we have, it is plain they can never have heard of Mrs. Jordan,

If they have any farther idea of us, it is of George III. and our Jack tars, the House of Lords and House of Commons, and this is no great addition to us. To go beyond this, to talk of arts and elegances as having taken up their abode here, or to say that Mrs. Abington was equal to Mademoiselle Mars, and that we at one time got up the *School for Scandal* as they do the *Misanthrope*, is to persuade them that Iceland is a pleasant summer-retreat, or to recommend the whale-fishery as a classical amusement. The French are the *Cockneys* of Europe, and have no idea how any one can exist out of Paris, or be alive without incessant grimace and *jabber*. Yet what imports it? What! though the joyous train I have just enumerated were, perhaps, never heard of in the precincts of the Palais-Royal, is it not enough that they gave pleasure where they were, to those who saw and heard them? Must our laugh, to be sincere, have its echo on the other side of the water? Had not the French their favourites and their enjoyments at the time, that we knew nothing of? Why then should we not have ours (and boast of them too) without their leave? A monopoly of self-conceit is not a monopoly of all other advantages. The English, when they go abroad, do not take away the prejudice against them by their looks. We seem duller and sadder than we are. As I write this, I am sitting in the open air in a beautiful valley, near Vevey: Clarens is on my left, the Dent de Jamant is behind me, the rocks of Meillerie opposite: under my feet is a green bank, enamelled with white and purple flowers, in which a dew-drop here and there still glitters with pearly light—

> And gaudy butterflies flutter around.

Intent upon the scene and upon the thoughts that stir

*Dent de Jamant*. A mountain near Lake Geneva.

within me, I conjure up at ...
and ...

... review before me ... all this phantasmagoria ... fixed, the face of the world and nature. But the traces of pleasure, in my case, sink into an absorbent ground of thoughtful melancholy, and require to be brought out by time and circumstances, or (as the critics tell you) by the *varnish* of style!

The *comfort*, on which the English lay so much stress, is of the same character, and arises from the same source as their mirth Both exist by contrast and a sort of contradiction. The English are certainly the most uncomfortable of all people in themselves, and therefore it is that they stand in need of every kind of comfort and accommodation The least thing puts them out of their way, and therefore everything must be in its place They are mightily offended at disagreeable tastes and smells, and therefore they exact the utmost neatness and nicety They are sensible of heat and cold, and therefore they cannot exist unless everything is snug and warm, or else open and airy, where they are. They must have "all appliances and means to boot." They are afraid of interruption and intrusion, and therefore they shut themselves up in door enjoyments and by their own firesides. It is not at they require luxuries (for that implies a high gree of epicurean indulgence and gratification), but ey cannot do without *their comforts*; that is, whater tends to supply their physical wants, and ward off sical pain and annoyance As they have not a fund animal spirits and enjoyments in themselves, they g to external objects for support, and derive solid n

but the reading this inscription on the side of a glaring wall in an instant restored me to myself; and still, whenever I think of or repeat it, it has the power of wafting me into the region of pure and blissful abstraction. I cannot help fancying it to be a legend of Popish superstition. Some monk of the dark ages must have invented and bequeathed it to us, who, loitering in trim gardens and watching the silent march of time, as his fruits ripened in the sun, or his flowers scented the balmy air, felt a mild languor pervade his senses, and

of quiet! *Horas non numero nisi serenas*—he might repeat, when the heavens were overcast and the gathering storm scattered the falling leaves, and turn to his books and wrap himself in his golden studies! Out of some such mood of mind, indolent, elegant, thoughtful, this exquisite device (speaking volumes) must have originated.

Of the several modes of counting time, that by the sun-dial is perhaps the most apposite and striking, if not the most convenient or comprehensive. It does not obtrude its observations, though it "morals on the time," and, by its stationary character, forms a contrast to the most fleeting of all essences. It stands *sub dio*—under the marble air, and there is some connection between the image of infinity and eternity. I should also like to have a sunflower growing near it with bees fluttering round.[1] It should be of iron to denote duration, and have a dull, leaden look. I hate a sun-dial made of

[1] Is this a verbal fallacy? Or in the close, retired, sheltered scene which I have imagined to myself, is not the sun-flower a natural accompaniment of the sun-dial?

wood, which is rather calculated to show the variations of the seasons, than the progress of time, slow, silent, imperceptible, chequered with light and shade. If our hours were all serene, we might probably take almost as little note of them as the dial does of those that are clouded. It is the shadow thrown across that gives us warning of their flight. Otherwise, our impressions would take the same undistinguishable hue; we should scarce be conscious of our existence. Those who have had none of the cares of this life to harass and disturb them, have been obliged to have recourse to the hopes and fears of the next to enliven the prospect before them. Most of the methods for measuring the lapse of time have, I believe, been the contrivance of monks and religious recluses, who, finding time hang heavy on their hands, were at some pains to see how they got rid of it. The hour-glass is, I suspect, an older invention; and it is certainly the most defective of all. Its creeping sands are not indeed an unapt emblem of the minute, countless portions of our existence; and the manner in which they gradually slide through the hollow glass and diminish in number till not a single one is left, also illustrates the way in which our years slip from us by stealth: but as a mechanical invention, it is rather a hindrance than a help, for it requires to have the time, of which it pretends to count the precious moments, taken up in attention to itself, and in seeing that when one end of the glass is empty, we turn it round, in order that it may go on again, or else all our labour is lost, and we must wait for some other mode of ascertaining the time before we can recover our reckoning and proceed as before. The philosopher in his cell, the cottager at her spinning-wheel, must, however, find an invaluable acquisition in this "companion of the lonely

hour," as it has been called,[1] which not only serves to tell how the time goes, but *to fill up its vacancies*. What a treasure must not the little box seem to hold, as if it were a sacred deposit of the very grains and fleeting sands of life! What a business, in lieu of other more important avocations, to see *it out to the last sand*, and then to renew the process again on the instant, that there may not be the least flaw or error in the account! What a strong sense must be brought home to the mind of the value and *irrecoverable nature* of the time that is fled; what a thrilling, incessant consciousness of the slippery tenure by which we hold what remains of it! Our very existence must seem crumbling to atoms, and running down (without a miraculous reprieve) to the last fragment. "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes" is a text that might be fairly inscribed on an hour-glass: it is ordinarily associated with the scythe of Time and a Death's-head, as a *Memento mori*, and has, no doubt, furnished many a tacit hint to the apprehensive and visionary enthusiast in favour of a resurrection to another life!

[1] Once more, companion of the lonely hour,
I'll turn thee up again.

*Bloomfield's Poems—The Widow to her Hour-glass.*

attach no importance to anything, except for the moment; they are only thinking how they shall get rid of one sensation for another; all their ideas are *in transitu*. Everything is detached, nothing is accumulated. It would be a million of years before a Frenchman would think of the *Horas non numero nisi serenas*. Its impassioned repose and *ideal* voluptuousness are as far from their breasts as the poetry of that line in Shakespeare—"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon that bank!" They never arrive at the classical—or the romantic. They blow the bubbles of vanity, fashion, and pleasure; but they do not expand their perceptions into refinement, or strengthen them into solidity. Where there is nothing fine in the ground-work of the imagination, nothing fine in the superstructure can be produced. They are light, airy, fanciful (to give them their due) —but when they attempt to be serious (beyond mere good sense) they are either dull or extravagant. When the volatile salt has flown off, nothing but a *caput mortuum* remains. They have infinite crotchets and caprices with their clocks and watches, which seem made for anything but to tell the hour—gold-repeaters, watches with metal covers, clocks with hands to count the seconds. There is no escaping from quackery and impertinence, even in our attempts to calculate the waste of time. The years gallop fast enough for me, without remarking every moment as it flies; and farther, I must say I dislike a watch (whether of French or English manufacture) that comes to me like a footpad with its face muffled, and does not present its clear, open aspect like a friend, and point with its finger to the time of day. All this opening and shutting of dull, heavy cases (under pretence that the glass-lid is liable to be broken, or lets in the dust or air and obstructs

the movement of the watch), is not to husband time, but to give trouble. It is mere pomposity and self-importance, like consulting a mysterious oracle that one carries about with one in one's pocket, instead of asking a common question of an acquaintance or companion. There are two clocks which strike the hour in the room where I am. This I do not like. In the first place, I do not want to be reminded twice how the time goes (it is like the second tap of a saucy servant at your door when perhaps you have no wish to get up): in the next place, it is starting a difference of opinion on the subject, and I am averse to every appearance of wrangling and disputation. Time moves on the same, whatever disparity there may be in our mode of keeping count of it, like true fame in spite of the cavils and contradictions of the critics. I am no friend to repeating watches. The only pleasant association I have with them is the account given by Rousseau of some French lady, who sat up reading the *New Héloïse* when it first came out, and ordering her maid to sound the repeater, found it was too late to go to bed, and continued reading on till morning. Yet how different is the interest excited by this story from the account which Rousseau some-where else gives of his sitting up with his father readin[g] romances, when a boy, till they were startled by th[e] swallows twittering in their nests at day-break, an[d] the father cried out, half angry and ashamed—"*Allo[ns] mon fils; je suis plus enfant que toi!*" In general, I ha[ve] heard repeating watches sounded in stage-coaches [at] night, when some fellow-traveller suddenly awak[e] and wondering what was the hour, and pressing [the spring] deliberately taken out his watch, and pressing [...] spring, it has counted out the time; each petty st[roke]

*Rousseau . . . father*. Rousseau's *Confessions*, Part II., B[...]

acting like a sharp puncture on the ear, and informing me of the dreary hours I had already passed, and of the more dreary ones I had to wait till morning.

The great advantage, it is true, which clocks have over watches and other dumb reckoners of time is, that for the most part they strike the hour—that they are as it were the mouth-pieces of time; that they not only point it to the eye, but impress it on the ear; that they "lend it both an understanding and a tongue." Time thus speaks to us in an audible and warning voice. Objects of sight are easily distinguished by the sense, and suggest useful reflections to the mind; sounds, from their intermittent nature, and perhaps other causes, appeal more to the imagination, and strike upon the heart. But to do this, they must be unexpected and involuntary—there must be no trick in the case—they should not be squeezed out with a finger and a thumb; there should be nothing optional, personal in their occurrence; they should be like stern, inflexible monitors, that nothing can prevent from discharging their duty. Surely, if there is anything with which we should not mix up our vanity and self-consequence, it is with Time, the most independent of all things. All the sublimity, all the superstition that hang upon this palpable mode of announcing its flight, are chiefly attached to this circumstance. Time would lose its abstracted character, if we kept it like a curiosity or a jack-in-a-box: its prophetic warnings would have no effect, if it obviously spoke only at our prompting, like a paltry ventriloquism. The clock that tells the coming, dreaded hour—the castle bell, that "with its brazen throat and iron tongue, sounds one unto the drowsy ear of night"—the curfew, "swinging slow with sullen roar" o'er wizard stream or fountain, are like a

and our pride consoled, as we ruminate on the vestiges of the past. The public in general, however, do not carry this speculative indifference about the future to what is to happen to themselves, or to the part they are to act in the busy scene. For my own part, I do; and the only wish I can form, or that ever prompts the passing sigh, would be to live some of my years over again—they would be those in which I enjoyed and suffered most!

The ticking of a clock in the night has nothing very interesting nor very alarming in it, though superstition has magnified it into an omen. In a state of vigilance or debility, it preys upon the spirits like the persecution of a teasing, pertinacious insect; and haunting the imagination after it has ceased in reality, is converted into the death-watch. Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions thus repeatedly and painfully urged upon its attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops. A clock striking with a clear and silver sound is a great relief in such circumstances, breaks the spell, and resembles a sylph-like and friendly spirit in the room. Foreigners, with all their tricks and contrivances upon clocks and time-pieces, are strangers to the sound of village-bells, though perhaps a people that can dance may dispense with them. They impart a pensive, wayward pleasure to the mind, and are a kind of chronology of happy events, often serious in the retrospect—births, marriages, and so forth. Coleridge calls them "the poor man's only music." A village-spire in England peeping from its cluster of trees is always associated in imagination with this cheerful accompaniment, and may be expected to pour its joyous tidings on the gale. In Catholic countries, you are stunned with the everlasting tolling of bells to prayers or for the dead.

## UN-DIAL

the Apennines, and other wild and mountainous ricts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple kling sound has a romantic and charming effect. e monks in former times appear to have taken a pride the construction of bells as well as churches, and ome of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages The chimes in Holland are a nuisance They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins You do not know whether the hours move or stand still, go backwards or forwards, so fantastical and perplexing are their accompaniments. Time is a more staid person-age, and not so full of gambols It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than Time His march is straightforward, but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment Time in Holland is a foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who "goes to church in a coranto, and light his pipe in a cinque-pace" The chimes with us, on th contrary, as they come in every three or four hou are like stages in the journey of the day They give fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the la tude of country-places At noon, their desultory, tr song is diffused through the hamlet with the odou rashers of bacon, at the close of day they send the worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the

*Coranto* A sprightly dance.
*Cinque-pace.* A solemn dance

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In the Apennines, and other wild and mountainous districts of Italy, the little chapel-bell with its simple tinkling sound has a romantic and charming effect. The monks in former times appear to have taken a pride in the construction of bells as well as churches; and some of those of the great cathedrals abroad (as at Cologne and Rouen) may be fairly said to be hoarse with counting the flight of ages. The chimes in Holland are a nuisance. They dance in the hours and the quarters. They leave no respite to the imagination. Before one set has done ringing in your ears, another begins You do not know whether [illegible] backwards or forward [illegible] are their accompanime[illegible] age, and not so full of gambols. It puts you in mind of a tune with variations, or of an embroidered dress. Surely, nothing is more simple than Time His march is straightforward; but we should have leisure allowed us to look back upon the distance we have come, and not be counting his steps every moment. Time in Holland is a foolish old fellow with all the antics of a youth, who "goes to church in a coranto, and lights his pipe in a cinque-pace." The chimes with us, on the contrary, as they come in every three or four hours, are like stages in the journey of the day. They give a fillip to the lazy, creeping hours, and relieve the lassitude of country-places. At noon, their desultory, trivial song is diffused through the hamlet with the odour of rashers of bacon; at the close of day they send the toil-worn sleepers to their beds. Their discontinuance would be a great loss to the thinking or unthinking public. Mr. Wordsworth has painted their effect on the mind

*Coranto*. A sprightly dance.
*Cinque-pace*. A solemn dance.

when he makes his friend Matthew, in a fit of inspired dotage,

> Sing those witty rhymes
> About the crazy old church-clock
> And the bewilder'd chimes.

The tolling of the bell for deaths and executions is a fearful summons, though, as it announces, not the advance of time but the approach of fate, it happily makes no part of our subject. Otherwise, the "sound of the bell" for Macheath's execution in the *Beggar's Opera*, or for that of the Conspirators in *Venice Preserved*, with the roll of the drum at a soldier's funeral, and a digression to that of my Uncle Toby, as it is so finely described by Sterne, would furnish ample topics to descant upon. If I were a moralist, I might disapprove the ringing in the new and ringing out the old year.

> Why dance ye, mortals, o'er the grave of Time?

St. Paul's bell tolls only for the death of our English kings, or a distinguished personage or two, with long intervals between.[1]

Those who have no artificial means of ascertaining the progress of time, are in general the most acute in discerning its immediate signs, and are most retentive of individual dates. The mechanical aids to knowledge are not sharpeners of the wits. The understanding of a savage is a kind of natural almanac, and more true in its prognostication of the future. In his mind's eye he sees what has happened or what is likely to happen to him, "as in a map the voyager his course." Those who

[1] Rousseau has admirably described the effect of bells on the imagination in a passage in the *Confessions*, beginning "*Le son des cloches m'a toujours singulièrement affecté*," etc.

read the times and seasons in the aspect of the heavens and the configurations of the stars, who count by moons and know when the sun rises and sets, are by no means ignorant of their own affairs or of the common concatenation of events. People in such situations have not their faculties distracted by any multiplicity of inquiries beyond what befalls themselves, and the outward appearances that mark the change. There is, therefore, a simplicity and clearness in the knowledge they possess, which often puzzles the more learned. I am sometimes surprised at a shepherd-boy by the roadside, who sees nothing but the earth and sky, asking me the time of day—he ought to know so much better than any one how far the sun is above the horizon. I suppose he wants to ask a question of a passenger, or to see if he has a watch. Robinson Crusoe lost his reckoning in the monotony of his life and that bewildering dream of solitude, and was fain to have recourse to the notches in a piece of wood. What a diary was his! And how time must have spread its circuit round him, vast and pathless as the ocean!

For myself, I have never had a watch nor any other mode of keeping time in my possession, nor ever wish to learn how time goes. It is a sign I have had little to do, few avocations, few engagements. When I am in a town, I can hear the clock; and when I am in the country, I can listen to the silence. What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus "with light-winged toys of feathered Idleness" to melt down hours to moments. Perhaps some such thoughts as I have here set down float before me like motes before my half-shut eyes, or some vivid image of the past by

forcible contrast rushes by me—"Diana and her fawn, and all the glories of the antique world"; then I start away to prevent the iron from entering my soul, and let fall some tears into that stream of time which separates me farther and farther from all I once loved! At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even without thinking. Somewhat of this idle humour I inherit from my father, though he had not the same freedom from *ennui*, for he was not a metaphysician; and there were stops and vacant intervals in his being which he did not know how to fill up. He used in these cases, and as an obvious resource, carefully to wind up his watch at night, and "with lack-lustre eye" more than once in the course of the day look to see what o'clock it was. Yet he had nothing else in his character in common with the elder Mr. Shandy. Were I to attempt a sketch of him, for my own or the reader's satisfaction, it would be after the following manner:——but now I recollect, I have done something of the kind once before, and were I to resume the subject here, some bat or owl of a critic, with spectacled gravity, might swear I had stolen the whole of this Essay from myself —or (what is worse) from him! So I had better let it go as it is.

## THE SICK CHAMBER

HAT a difference between this subject and my last—"Free Admission"! Yet from the crowded theatre to he sick chamber, from the noise, the glare, the keen delight, to the loneliness, the darkness, the dulness, and the pain, there is but one step. A breath of air, an overhanging cloud effects it, and though the transition is made in an instant, it seems as if it would last for ever. A sudden illness not only puts a stop to the career of our triumphs and agreeable sensations, but blots out and cancels all recollections of and desire for them. We lose the relish of enjoyment; we are effectually cured of our romance. Our bodies are confined to our beds; nor can our thoughts wantonly detach themselves and take the road to pleasure, but turn back with doubt and loathing at the faint, evanescent phantom which has usurped its place If the folding-doors of the imagination were thrown open or left ajar, so that from the disordered couch where we lay we could still hail the vista of the past or future, and see the gay and gorgeous visions floating at a distance, however denied to our embrace, the contrast, though mortifying, might have something soothing in it, the mock-splendour might be the greater for the actual gloom. but the misery is that we cannot conceive anything beyond or bette than the present evil, we are shut up and spell-boun in that, the curtains of the mind are drawn close, w cannot escape from "the body of this death," our sou are conquered, dismayed, "cooped and cabined in our corporeal frames and thrown with the lumber of our corporeal frames one corner of a neglected and solitary room. We h ourselves and everything else; nor does one ray

comfort "peep through the blanket of the dark" to give us hope. How should we entertain the image of grace and beauty, when our bodies writhe with pain? To what purpose invoke the echo of some rich strain of music, when we ourselves can scarcely breathe? The very attempt is an impossibility. We give up the vain task of linking delight to agony, of urging torpor into ecstasy, which makes the very heart sick. We feel the present pain, and an impatient longing to get rid of it. This were indeed "a consummation devoutly to be wished": on this we are intent, in earnest, inexorable: all else is impertinence and folly; and could we but obtain *ease* (that Goddess of the infirm and suffering) at any price, we think we could forswear all other joy and all other sorrows. *Hoc erat in votis.* All other things but our disorder and its cure seem less than nothing and vanity. It assumes a palpable form; it becomes a demon, a spectre, an incubus hovering over and oppressing us: we grapple with it: it strikes its fangs into us, spreads its arms round us, infects us with its breath, glares upon us with its hideous aspect; we feel it take possession of every fibre and of every faculty; and we are at length so absorbed and fascinated by it, that we cannot divert our reflections from it for an instant, for all other things but pain (and that which we suffer most acutely) appear to have lost their pith and power to interest. They are turned to dust and stubble. This is the reason of the fine resolutions we sometimes form in such cases, and of the vast superiority of a sick bed to the pomps and thrones of the world. We easily renounce wine when we have nothing but the taste of physic in our mouths: the rich banquet tempts us not, when "our very gorge rises" within us: Love and Beauty fly from a bed twisted into a thousand folds

by restless lassitude and tormenting cares: the nerve of pleasure is killed by the pains that shoot through the head or rack the limbs: an indigestion seizes you with its leaden grasp and giant force (down, Ambition!) —you shiver and tremble like a leaf in a fit of the ague. (Avarice, let go your palsied hold!) We then are in the mood, without ghostly advice, to betake ourselves to the life of "hermit poor,

In pensive place obscure,"—

and should be glad to prevent the return of a fever raging in the blood by feeding on pulse, and slaking our thirst at the limpid brook. These sudden resolutions, however, or "vows made in pain as violent and void," are generally of short duration; the excess and the sorrow for it are alike selfish, and those repentances which are the most loud and passionate are the surest to end speedily in a relapse; for both originate in the same cause, the being engrossed by the prevailing feeling (whatever it may be), and an utter incapacity to look beyond it.

The Devil was sick the Devil a monk would be:
The Devil grew well, the Devil a monk was he!

It is amazing how little effect physical suffering or local circumstances have upon the mind, except while we are subject to their immediate influence While the impression lasts, they are everything· when it is gone, they are nothing. We toss and tumble about in a sick bed; we lie on our right side, we then change to the left; we stretch ourselves on our backs, we turn on our faces; we wrap ourselves up under the clothes to exclude the cold, we throw them off to escape the heat and suffocation; we grasp the pillow in agony, we fling our-

*The Devil . . . was he. Rabelais*, Book IV ch. 24.

selves out of bed, we walk up and down the room with hasty or feeble steps; we return into bed; we are worn out with fatigue and pain, yet can get no repose for the one, or intermission for the other; we summon all our patience, or give vent to passion and petty rage: nothing avails; we seem wedded to our disease, "like life and death in disproportion met"; we make new efforts, try new expedients, but nothing appears to shake it off, or promise relief from our grim foe: it infixes its sharp sting into us, or overpowers us by its sickly and stunning weight: every moment is as much as we can bear, and yet there seems no end of our lengthening tortures; we are ready to faint with exhaustion, or work ourselves up to frenzy: we "trouble deaf Heaven with our bootless prayers": we think our last hour is come, or peevishly wish it were, to put an end to the scene; we ask questions as to the origin of evil and the necessity of pain; we "moralise our complaints into a thousand similes"; we deny the use of medicine *in toto*, we have a full persuasion that all doctors are mad or knaves, that our object is to gain relief, and theirs (out of the perversity of human nature, or to seem wiser than we) to prevent it; we catechise the apothecary, rail at the nurse, and cannot so much as conceive the possibility that this state of things should not last for ever; we are even angry at those who would give us encouragement, as if they would make dupes or children of us; we might seek a release by poison, a halter, or the sword, but we have not strength of mind enough—our nerves are too shaken—to attempt even this poor revenge—when lo! a change comes, the spell falls off, and the next moment we forget all that has happened to us. No sooner does our disorder turn its back upon us than we laugh at it. The state we have been in, sounds like a dream, a fable;

health is the order of the day, strength is ours *de jure* and *de facto*; and we discard all uncalled-for evidence to the contrary with a smile of contemptuous incredulity, just as we throw our physic-bottles out of the window! I see (as I awake from a short, uneasy doze) a golden light shine through my white window-curtains on the opposite wall:—is it the dawn of a new day, or the departing light of evening? I do not well know, for the opium "they have drugged my posset with" has made strange havoc with my brain, and I am uncertain whether time has stood still, or advanced, or gone backward. By "puzzling o'er the doubt," my attention is drawn a little out of myself to external objects; and I consider whether it would not administer some relief to my monotonous languor, if I could call up a vivid picture of an evening sky I witnessed a short while before, the white fleecy clouds, the azure vault, the verdant fields and balmy air In vain! The wings of fancy refuse to mount from my bed-side The air with out has nothing in common with the closeness within: the clouds disappear, the sky is instantly overcast and black. I walk out in this scene soon after I recover, and with those favourite and well-known objects interposed, can no longer recall the tumbled pillow, the juleps or the labels, or the unwholesome dungeon in which I was before immured. What is contrary to our present sensations or settled habits, amalgamates indifferently with our belief: the imagination rules over imaginary themes, the senses and custom have a narrower sway, and admit but one guest at a time It is hardly to be wondered at that we dread physical calamities so little beforehand: we think no more of them the moment after they have happened. *Out of sight, out of mind*. This will perhaps explain

actual punishment has so little effect; it is a state contrary to nature, alien to the will. If it does not touch honour and conscience (and where these are not, how can it touch them?) it goes for nothing: and where these are, it rather sears and hardens them. The gyves, the cell, the meagre fare, the hard labour are abhorrent to the mind of the culprit on whom they are imposed, who carries the love of liberty or indulgence to licentiousness; and who throws the thought of them behind him (the moment he can evade the penalty) with scorn and laughter,

> Like Samson his green wythes.[1]

So, in travelling, we often meet with great fatigue and inconvenience from heat or cold, or rather accidents, and resolve never to go a journey again; but we are ready to set off on a new excursion to-morrow. We remember the landscape, the change of scene, the romantic expectation, and think no more of the heat, the noise, and dust. The body forgets its grievances till they recur; but imagination, passion, pride, have a longer memory and quicker apprehensions. To the first the pleasure or the pain is nothing when once over; to the last it is only then that they begin to exist. The line in Metastasio,

> The worst of every evil is the fear,

is true only when applied to this latter sort.—It is curious that, on coming out of a sick-room, where one

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has been pent some time, and grown weak and nervous, and looking at Nature for the first time, the objects that present themselves have a very questionable and spectral appearance, the people in the street resemble flies crawling about, and seem scarce half-alive. It is we who are just risen from a torpid and unwholesome state, and who impart our imperfect feelings of existence, health, and motion to others. Or it may be that the violence and exertion of the pain we have gone through make common every-day objects seem unreal and unsubstantial It is not till we have established ourselves in form in the sitting-room, wheeled round the arm-chair to the fire (for this makes part of our reintroduction to the ordinary modes of being in all seasons), felt our appetite return, and taken up a book. that we can be considered as at all restored to ourselves. And even then our first sensations are rather empirical than positive, as after sleep we stretch out our hands to know whether we are awake This is the time for reading Books are then indeed "a world, both pure and good," into which we enter with all our hearts, after our revival from illness and respite from the tomb, as with the freshness and novelty of youth. *They are not merely acceptable as without too much* exertion they pass the time and relieve *ennui*; but from a certain suspension and deadening of the passions, and abstraction from worldly pursuits, they may be said to bring back and be friendly to the guileless and enthusiastic tone of feeling with which we formerly read them. Sickness has weaned us *pro tempore* from contest and cabal; and we are fain to be docile and children again. All strong changes in our present pursuits throw us back upon the past. This is the shortest and most complete emancipation from our late

discomfiture. We wonder that any one who has read *The History of a Foundling* should labour under an indigestion; nor do we comprehend how a perusal of the *Faery Queen* should not ensure the true believer an uninterrupted succession of halcyon days. Present objects bear a retrospective meaning, and point to "a foregone conclusion." Returning back to life with half-strung nerves and shattered strength, we seem as when we first entered it with uncertain purposes and faltering aims. The machine has received a shock, and it moves on more tremulously than before, and not all at once in the beaten track. Startled at the approach of death, we are willing to get as far from it as we can by making a proxy of our former selves; and finding the precarious tenure by which we hold existence, and its last sands running out, we gather up and make the most of the fragments that memory has stored up for us. Everything is seen through a medium of reflection and contrast. We hear the sound of merry voices in the street; and this carries us back to the recollections of some country-town or village-group—

> We see the children sporting on the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters roaring evermore.

A cricket chirps on the hearth, and we are reminded of Christmas gambols long ago. The very cries in the street seem to be of a former date; and the dry toast eats very much as it did—twenty years ago. A rose smells doubly sweet, after being stifled with tinctures and essences; and we enjoy the idea of a journey and an inn the more for having been bed-rid. But a book is the secret and sure charm to bring all these implied

*Roaring evermore.* The poet (Wordsworth) wrote "rolling," but Hazlitt habitually misquotes. Compare the quotation on page 22 with Act IV. sc. i. vv. 127–8 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

associations to a focus. I should prefer an old one, Mr. Lamb's favourite, the *Journey to Lisbon*; or the *Decameron*, if I could get it, but if a new one, let it be *Paul Clifford*. That book has the singular advantage of being written by a gentleman, and not about his own class. The characters he commemorates are every moment at fault between life and death, hunger and a *forced loan* on the public; and therefore the interest they take in themselves, and which we take in them, has no cant or affectation in it, but is "lively, audible, and full of vent." A set of well-dressed gentlemen picking their teeth with a graceful air after dinner, endeavouring to keep their cravats from the slightest discomposure, and saying the most insipid things in the most insipid manner, do not make a *scene*. Well, then, I have got the new paraphrase on the *Beggar's Opera*, am fairly embarked on it, and at the end of the first volume, where I am galloping across the heath with the three highwaymen, while the moon is shining full upon them, feel my nerves so braced, and my spirits so exhilarated, that, to say truth, I am scarce sorry for the occasion that has thrown me upon the work and the author—have quite forgot my *Sick Room*, and am more than half-ready to recant the doctrine that a *Free-Admission* to the theatre is

—The true pathos and sublime
Of human life —

for I feel as I read that if the stage shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments

*Gentleman*, Bulwer Lytton.

## ON THE WANT OF MONEY

It is hard to be without money. To get on without it is like travelling in a foreign country without a passport—you are stopped, suspected, and made ridiculous at every turn, besides being subjected to the most serious inconveniences. The want of money I here allude to is not altogether that which arises from absolute poverty—for where there is a downright absence of the common necessaries of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labour, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants—but that uncertain, casual, precarious mode of existence, in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted, the want of money joined with the hope and possibility of getting it, the intermediate state of difficulty and suspense between the last guinea or shilling and the next that we may have the good luck to encounter. This gap, this unwelcome interval constantly recurring, however shabbily got over, is really full of many anxieties, misgivings, mortifications, meannesses, and deplorable embarrassments of every description. I may attempt (this essay is not a fanciful speculation) to enlarge upon a few of them.

It is hard to go without one's dinner through sheer distress, but harder still to go without one's breakfast. Upon the strength of that first and aboriginal meal, one may muster courage to face the difficulties before one, and to dare the worst: but to be roused out of one's warm bed, and perhaps a profound oblivion of care, with golden dreams (for poverty does not prevent golden dreams), and told there is nothing for breakfast, is cold comfort for which one's half-strung

nerves are not prepared, and throws a damp upon the prospects of the day. It is a bad beginning. A man without a breakfast is a poor creature, unfit to go in search of one, to meet the frown of the world, or to borrow a shilling of a friend. He may beg at the corner of a street—nothing is too mean for the tone of his feelings—robbing on the highway is out of the question, as requiring too much courage, and some opinion of a man's self. It is, indeed, as old Fuller, or some worthy of that age, expresses it, "the heaviest stone which melancholy can throw at a man," to learn, the first thing after he rises in the morning, or even to be dunned with it in bed, that there is no loaf, tea, or butter in the house, and that the baker, the grocer, and butterman have refused to give any farther credit. This is taking one sadly at a disadvantage It is striking at one's spirit and resolution in their very source—the stomach—it is attacking one on the side of hunger and mortification at once; it is casting one into the very mire of humility and Slough of Despond. The worst is, to know what face to put upon the matter, what excuse to make to the servants, what answer to send to the tradespeople; whether to laugh it off, or be grave, or angry, or indifferent, in short, to know how to parry off an evil which you cannot help What a luxury, what a God's-send in such a dilemma, to find a half-

[illegible]

a former heap! Vain hope! Unfounded illusion! The

*Mire . . . Despond* Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* The Marsh of Despondency from which Christian is rescued with difficulty. An allegory of the effect of despair on the soul.

experienced in such matters know better, and laugh in their sleeves at so improbable a suggestion. Not a corner, not a cranny, not a pocket, not a drawer has been left unrummaged, or has not been subjected over and over again to more than the strictness of a custom-house scrutiny. Not the slightest rustle of a piece of bank-paper, not the gentlest pressure of a piece of hard metal, but would have given notice of its hiding-place with electrical rapidity, long before, in such circumstances. All the variety of pecuniary resources which form a legal tender on the current coin of the realm, are assuredly drained, exhausted to the last farthing before this time. But is there nothing in the house that one can turn to account? Is there not an old family-watch, or piece of plate, or a ring, or some worthless trinket that one could part with? Nothing belonging to one's-self or a friend, that one could raise the wind upon, till something better turns up? At this moment an old clothes-man passes, and his deep, harsh tones sound like an intended insult on one's distress, and banish the thought of applying for his assistance, as one's eye glances furtively at an old hat or a great-coat, hung up behind a closet-door. Humiliating contemplations! Miserable uncertainty! One hesitates, and the opportunity is gone by; for without one's breakfast, one has not the resolution to do anything!—The late Mr. Sheridan was often reduced to this unpleasant predicament. Possibly he had little appetite for breakfast himself; but the servants complained bitterly on this head, and said that Mrs. Sheridan was sometimes kept waiting for a couple of hours, while they had to hunt through the neighbourhood, and beat up for coffee, eggs, and French rolls. The same perplexity in this instance appears to have extended to the pro-

viding for the dinner; for so sharp-set were they, that to cut short a debate with a butcher's apprentice about leaving a leg of mutton without the money, the cook clapped it into the pot: the butcher's boy, probably used to such encounters, with equal coolness took it out again, and marched off with it in his tray in triumph. It required a man to be the author of *The School for Scandal*, to run the gauntlet of such disagreeable occurrences every hour of the day There was one comfort, however, that poor Sheridan had: he did not foresee that Mr. Moore would write his Life![1]

[1] Taylor, of the Opera House, used to say of Sheridan, that

[illegible]

*pounds) in a six weeks' jaunt to Bath*, and returned to town as poor as a rat Whenever he and his son were invited out into the

[illegible]

crossed Sheridan once wanted to take Mrs. Sheridan a very

[illegible]

The going without a dinner is another of the miseries of wanting money, though one can bear up against this calamity better than the former, which really

would be delighted with it, but he was sorry to have nothing under a hundred pound bank-note in the house. She said she had come provided for such an accident, and could give change for a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred pound note, if it were necessary. Grimm then went back to his principal for farther instructions: who made an excuse that he had no stamped receipt by him. For this, Mrs. B. said, she was also provided; she had brought one in her pocket. At each message, she could hear them laughing heartily in the next room at the idea of having met with their match for once; and presently after, Sheridan came out in high good-humour, and paid her the amount of her bill, in ten, five, and one pounds. Once when a creditor brought him a bill for payment, which had often been presented before, and the man complained of its soiled and tattered state, and said he was quite ashamed to see it, "I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do with it, my friend," said Sheridan, "take it home, and write it upon *parchment*!" He once mounted a horse which a horse-dealer was showing off near a coffee-house at the bottom of St. James's Street, rode it to Tattersall's, and sold it, and walked quietly back to the spot from which he set out. The owner was furious, swore he would be the death of him; and, in quarter of an hour afterwards, they were seen sitting together over a bottle of wine in the coffee-house, the horse-jockey with the tears running down his face at Sheridan's jokes, and almost ready to hug him as an honest fellow. Sheridan's house and lobby were beset with duns every morning, who were told that Mr. Sheridan was not yet up, and shown into the several rooms on each side of the entrance. As soon as he had breakfasted, he asked, "Are those doors all shut, John?" and, being assured they were, marched out very deliberately between them, to the astonishment of his self-invited guests, who soon found the bird was flown. I have heard one of his old City friends declare, that such was the effect of his frank, cordial manner, and insinuating eloquence, that he was always afraid to go to ask him for a debt of long standing, lest he should borrow twice as much. A play had been put off one night, or a favourite actor did not appear, and the audience demanded to have their money back again: but when they came to the door, they were told by the check-

"blights the tender blossom and promise of the day." With one good meal, one may hold a parley with hunger and moralise upon temperance. One has time

takers there was none for them, for that Mr Sheridan had been in the meantime, and had carried off all the money in the till He used often to get the old cobbler who kept a stall under the ruins of Drury Lane to broil a beef-steak for him, and take

the plea, What signified the concerns of a private individual, compared to the good of the State?" When he got to Covent Garden, he went into the Piazza Coffee-house, to steady himself with another bottle, and then strolled out to the end of the Piazza to look at the progress of the fire Here he was accosted by Charles Kemble and Fawcett, who complimented him on the calmness with which he seemed to regard so great a loss He declined this praise, and said—"Gentlemen, there are but three

words, except that he appealed to the *mens conscia recti* very

picked him up in the street, and who wanted to know who he was.—"I am Mr Wilberforce!"—is well known, and shows that, however frequently he might be at a loss for money, he never wanted wit!

to turn one's-self and look about one—to "screw one's courage to the sticking-place," to graduate the scale of disappointment, and stave off appetite till supper-time. You gain time, and time in this weather-cock world is everything. You may dine at two, or at six, or seven—as most convenient. You may in the meanwhile receive an invitation to dinner, or some one (not knowing how you are circumstanced) may send you a present of a haunch of venison or a brace of pheasants from the country, or a distant relation may die and leave you a legacy, or a patron may call and overwhelm you with his smiles and bounty,

As kind as kings upon their coronation-day;

or there is no saying what may happen. One may wait for dinner—breakfast admits of no delay, of no interval interposed between that and our first waking thoughts.[1] Besides, there are shifts and devices, shabby and mortifying enough, but still available in case of need. How many expedients are there in this great city (London), time out of mind and times without number, resorted to by the dilapidated and thrifty speculator, to get through this grand difficulty without utter failure! One may dive into a cellar, and dine on boiled beef and carrots for tenpence, with the knives and forks chained to the table, and jostled by greasy elbows that seem to make such a precaution not unnecessary (hunger is proof against indignity!)—or one may contrive to part with a superfluous article of wearing apparel, and carry home a mutton-chop and cook it in a garret; or one may drop in at a friend's at the dinner-hour, and be asked

[1] In Scotland, it seems, the draught of ale or whiskey with which you commence the day is emphatically called "taking your *morning*."

to stay or not; or one may walk out and take a turn in the Park, about the time, and return home to tea, so as at least to avoid the sting of the evil—the appearance of not having dined. You then have the laugh on

(for what business has a man without money with one? —*See English Malthus and Scotch Macculloch*)—and it is only my intention here to bring forward such instances of the want of money as are tolerable both in theory and practice. I once lived on coffee (as an experiment) for a fortnight together, while I was finishing the copy of a half-length portrait of a Manchester manufacturer, who had died worth a plum. I rather slurred over the coat, which was a reddish brown, "of formal cut," to receive my five guineas, with which I went to market myself, and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes, and while they were getting ready, and I could hear them hissing in the pan, read a volume of *Gil Blas*, containing the account of the fair Aurora This was in the days of my youth. Gentle reader, do not smile! Neither Monsieur de Very, nor Louis XVIII., over an oyster-pâté, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word *luxury* better than I did at that moment! If the want of money has its drawbacks and disadvantages, it is not without its contrasts and counterbalancing effects, for which I fear nothing else can make us amends. Amelia's *hashed mutton* is immortal; and there is something amusing, though carried to excess and caricature (which is very unusual with

*Monsieur de Very* The owner of a famous restaurant in Paris.
*Apicius* A Roman epicure

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the author), in the contrivances of old Caleb, in *The Bride of Lammermuir,* for raising the wind at breakfast, dinner, and supper-time. I recollect a ludicrous instance of a disappointment in a dinner which happened to a person of my acquaintance some years ago. He was not only poor but a very poor creature, as will be imagined. His wife had laid by fourpence (their whole remaining stock) to pay for the baking of a shoulder of mutton and potatoes, which they had in the house, and on her return home from some errand, she found he had expended it in purchasing a new string for a guitar. On this occasion a witty friend quoted the lines from Milton:

> And ever against *eating* cares,
> Wrap me in soft Lydian airs!

Defoe, in his *Life of Colonel Jack,* gives a striking picture of his young beggarly hero sitting with his companion for the first time in his life at a threepenny ordinary, and the delight with which he relished the hot smoking soup, and the airs with which he called about him—"and every time," he says, "we called for bread, or beer, or whatever it might be, the waiter answered, 'coming, gentlemen, coming'; and this delighted me more than all the rest!" It was about this time, as the same pithy author expresses it, "the Colonel took upon him to wear a shirt!" Nothing can be finer than the whole of the feeling conveyed in the commencement of this novel, about wealth and finery from the immediate contrast of privation and poverty. One would think it a labour, like the Tower of Babel, to build up a beau and a fine gentleman about town. The little vagabond's admiration of the old man at the banking-house, who sits surrounded by heaps of gold as

if it were a dream or poetic vision, and his own eager anxious visits, day by day, to the hoard he had deposited in the hollow tree, are in the very foremost style of truth and nature. See the same intense feeling expressed in Luke's address to his riches in the *City Madam*, and in the extraordinary raptures of the "Spanish Rogue" in contemplating and hugging his ingots of pure gold and Spanish pieces of eight: to which Mr. Lamb has referred in excuse for the rhapsodies of some of our elder poets *on this subject, which to our present more refined and* tamer apprehensions sound like blasphemy.[1] In earlier times, before the diffusion of luxury, of knowledge, and other sources of enjoyment had become common, and acted as a diversion to the cravings of avarice, the passionate admiration, the idolatry, the hunger and thirst of wealth and all its precious symbols, was a kind of madness or hallucination, and Mammon was

money, not
—or, if you
have just *enough to* do that, to have nothing left for the waiter;—to be stopped at a turnpike gate, and forced to turn back;—not to venture to call a hackney-coach in a shower of rain (when you have only one shilling left yourself, it is a *bore* to have it taken out of your pocket by a friend, who comes into your house eating peaches on a hot summer's day, and desiring you to pay for the coach in which he visits you);—not to be able to purchase a lottery-ticket, by which you might make your fortune, and get out of all your difficulties;—or to find a letter lying for you at a country post-office, and not to have money in your pocket to

[1] Shylock's lamentation over the loss of "his daughter and his ducats" is another case in point

free it, and be obliged to return for it the next day. The letter so unreasonably withheld may be supposed to contain money, and in this case there is a foretaste, a sort of actual possession taken through the thin folds of the paper and the wax, which in some measure indemnifies us for the delay: the bank-note, the post-bill seems to smile upon us, and shake hands through its prison bars;—or it may be a love-letter, and then the tantalisation is at its height: to be deprived in this manner of the only consolation that can make us amends for the want of money, by this very want—to fancy you can see the name—to try to get a peep at the hand-writing—to touch the seal, and yet not dare to break it open—is provoking indeed—the climax of amorous and gentlemanly distress. Players are sometimes reduced to great extremity, by the seizure of their scenes and dresses, or (what is called) *the property of the theatre,* which hinders them from acting; as authors are prevented from finishing a work, for want of money to buy the books necessary to be consulted on some material point or circumstance, in the progress of it. There is a set of poor devils who live upon a printed *prospectus* of a work that never will be written, for which they solicit your name and half-a-crown. Decayed actresses take an annual benefit at one of the theatres; there are patriots who live upon periodical subscriptions, and critics who go about the country lecturing on poetry. I confess I envy none of these; but there are persons who, provided they can live, care not how they live—who are fond of display, even when it implies exposure; who court notoriety under every shape, and embrace the public with demonstrations of wantonness. There are genteel beggars who send up a well-penned epistle requesting the loan of a shilling. Your snug bachelors

and retire
knock of
I dislike
premature genius into notice, or that extends its piecemeal, formal charity towards it in its decline. I hate your Literary Funds, and Funds for Decayed Artists—they are corporations for the encouragement of meanness, pretence, and insolence. Of all people, I cannot tell how it is, but players appear to me the best able to do without money. They are a privileged class. If not exempt from the common calls of necessity and business, they are enabled "by their so potent art" to soar above them. As they make imaginary ills their own, real ones become imaginary, sit light upon them, and are thrown off with comparatively little trouble. Their life is theatrical—its various accidents are the shifting scenes of a play—rags and finery, tears and laughter, a mock-dinner or a real one, a crown of jewels or of straw, are to them nearly the same. I am sorry I cannot carry on this reasoning to actors who are past their prime. The gilding of their profession is then worn off, and shows the false metal beneath; vanity and hope (the props of their existence) have had their day, their former gaiety and carelessness serve as a foil to their present discouragements; and want and infirmities press upon them at once "We know what we are," as Ophelia says, "but we know not what we shall be." A workhouse seems the last resort of poverty and distress—a *parish-pauper* is another name for all that is mean and to be deprecated in human existence. But that name is but an abstraction, an average term—"within that lowest deep, a lower deep may open to receive us." I heard not long ago of a poor man, who had been for many years a respectable tradesman in London, and

who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonising thread will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old-maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, "MY DEAR MISS NANCY!"

Another of the greatest miseries of a want of money, is the tap of a dun at your door, or the previous silence when you expect it—the uneasy sense of shame at the approach of your tormentor; the wish to meet, and yet to shun the encounter; the disposition to bully; the fear of irritating; the real and the sham excuses; the submission to impertinence; the assurances of a speedy supply; the disingenuousness you practise on him and on yourself; the degradation in the eyes of others and your own. Oh! it is wretched to have to confront a just and oft-repeated demand, and to be without the means to satisfy it; to deceive the confidence that has been placed in you; to forfeit your credit; to be placed at the power of another, to be indebted to his lenity; to stand convicted of having played the knave or the fool; and to have no way left to escape contempt, but by incurring pity. The suddenly meeting a creditor on

turning the corner of a street, whom you have been trying to avoid for months, and had persuaded you were several hundred miles off, discomposes the features and shatters the nerves for some time. It is also a serious annoyance to be unable to repay a loan to a friend, who is in want of it—nor is it very pleasant to be so hard-run as to be induced to request the repayment. It is difficult to decide the preference between debts of honour and legal demands; both are bad enough, and almost a fair excuse for driving any one into the hands

sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cool contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If anything can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you have a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and helpless feeling has reached its "Rake's Progress," just dropped the with the laconic has been read, and won't do."[1] To feel poverty is bad; but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off,

[1] It is provoking enough, and makes one look like a fool, to receive a printed notice of a blank in the last lottery, with a postscript hoping for your future favours

who was compelled to take shelter in one of those receptacles of age and wretchedness, and who said he could be contented with it—he had his regular meals, a nook in the chimney, and a coat to his back—but he was forced to lie three in a bed, and one of the three was out of his mind and crazy, and his great delight was, when the others fell asleep, to tweak their noses, and flourish his night-cap over their heads, so that they were obliged to lie awake, and hold him down between them. One should be quite mad to bear this. To what a point of insignificance may not human life dwindle! To what fine, agonising thread will it not cling! Yet this man had been a lover in his youth, in a humble way, and still begins his letters to an old-maid (his former flame), who sometimes comforts him by listening to his complaints, and treating him to a dish of weak tea, "MY DEAR MISS NANCY!"

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sold themselves to the devil—or, if unsuccessful, is rendered doubly galling by the smooth, civil leer of cool contempt with which you are dismissed, as if they had escaped from your clutches—not you from theirs. If anything can be added to the mortification and distress arising from straitened circumstances, it is when vanity comes in to barb the dart of poverty—when you have a picture on which you had calculated, rejected from an exhibition, or a manuscript returned on your hands, or a tragedy damned, at the very instant when your cash and credit are at the lowest ebb. This forlorn and helpless feeling has reached its *acme* in the prison-scene in Hogarth's "Rake's Progress," where his unfortunate hero has just dropped the manager's letter from his hands, with the laconic answer written in it: "Your play has been read, and won't do."[1] To feel poverty is bad, but to feel it with the additional sense of our incapacity to shake it off,

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and that we have not merit enough to retrieve our circumstances—and, instead of being held up to admiration, are exposed to persecution and insult—is the last stage of human infirmity. My friend, Mr. Leigh Hunt (no one is better qualified than he to judge), thinks that the most pathetic story in the world is that of Smollett's fine gentleman and lady in gaol, who have been roughly handled by the mob for some paltry attempt at raising the wind, and she exclaims in extenuation of the pitiful figure he cuts, "Ah! he was a fine fellow once!"

It is justly remarked by the poet, that poverty has no greater inconvenience attached to it than that of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shows us others in a very contemptible point of view. People are not soured by misfortune, but by the reception they meet with in it. When we do not want assistance, every one is ready to obtrude it on us, as if it were advice. If we do, they shun us instantly. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house. It is a mistake, however, that we court the society of the rich and prosperous, merely with a view to what we can get from them. We do so, because there is something in external rank and splendour that gratifies and imposes on the imagination; just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondriacal, or as we would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one. I never knew but one man who would lend his money freely and fearlessly in spite of circumstances (if you were likely to pay him, he grew peevish, and

*One man*. Possibly Jeffrey.

would pick a quarrel with you). I can only account for this from a certain sanguine buoyancy and magnificence of spirit, not deterred by distant consequences, or damped by untoward appearances. I have been told by those who shared of the same bounty, that it was not owing to generosity, but ostentation—if so, he kept his ostentation a secret from me, for I never received a hint or a look from which I could infer that I was not the lender, and he the person obliged. Neither was I expected to keep in the background or play an under-part. On the contrary, I was encouraged to do my best; my dormant faculties roused, the ease of my circumstances was on condition of the freedom and independence of my mind, my lucky hits were applauded, and I was paid to shine. I am not ashamed of such patronage as this, nor do I regret any circumstance relating to it but its termination People endure existence even in Paris: the rows of chairs on the boulevards are gay with smiles and dress: the saloons, they say, are brilliant; at the theatre there is Mademoiselle Mars —what is all this to me? After a certain period, we live only in the past. Give me back one single evening at Boxhill, after a stroll in the deep-empurpled woods, before Buonaparte was yet beaten, "with wine of attic taste," when wit, beauty, friendship presided at the board! Oh no! Neither the time nor friends that are fled, can be recalled!—Poverty is the test of sincerity, the touchstone of civility. Even abroad, they treat you scurvily if your remittances do not arrive regularly, and though you have hitherto lived like a "Milord Anglais" The want of money loses us friends not worth the keeping, mistresses who are naturally jilts or coquettes; it cuts us out of society, to which dress and equipage are the only introduction; and deprives us of

a number of luxuries and advantages of which the only good is, that they can only belong to the possessors of a large fortune. Many people are wretched because they have not money to buy a fine horse, or to hire a fine house, or to keep a carriage, or to purchase a diamond necklace, or to go to a race-ball, or to give their servants new liveries. I cannot myself enter into all this. If I can *live to think, and think to live*, I am satisfied. Some want to possess pictures, others to collect libraries. All I wish is, sometimes, to see the one and read the other. Gray was mortified because he had not a hundred pounds to bid for a curious library; and the Duchess of —— has immortalised herself by her liberality on that occasion, and by the handsome compliment she addressed to the poet, that "if it afforded him any satisfaction, she had been more than paid, by her pleasure in reading the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*."

Literally and truly, one cannot get on well in the world without money. To be in want of money, is to pass through life with little credit or pleasure; it is to live out of the world, or to be despised if you come into it; it is not to be sent for to Court, or asked out to dinner, or noticed in the street; it is not to have your opinion consulted or else rejected with contempt, to have your acquirements carped at and doubted, your good things disparaged, and at last to lose the wit and the spirit to say them; it is to be scrutinised by strangers, and neglected by friends; it is to be a thrall to circumstances, an exile in a foreign land; to forego leisure, freedom, ease of body and mind, to be dependent on the good-will and caprice of others, or earn a precarious and irksome livelihood by some laborious employment: it is to be compelled to stand behind a counter, or to sit at a desk in some public office, or to

marry your landlady, or not the person you would wish; or to go out to the East or West Indies, or to get a situation as judge abroad, and return home with a liver complaint; or to be a law-stationer, or a scrivener or scavenger, or newspaper reporter; or to read law and sit in court without a brief, or be deprived of the use of your fingers by transcribing Greek manuscripts, or to be a seal engraver and pore yourself blind; or to go upon the stage, or try some of the Fine Arts, with all your pains, anxiety, and hopes, most probably to fail, or, if you succeed, after the exertions of years and undergoing constant distress of mind and fortune, to be assailed on every side with envy, back-biting, and falsehood, or to be a favourite with the public for awhile, and then thrown into the background—or a gaol, by the fickleness of taste and some new favourite; [illegible] youth, of [illegible] be jostled [illegible] our coach, or avoided by those who know your worth and shrink from it as a claim on their respect or their purse, to be a burden to your relations, or unable to do anything for them; to be ashamed to venture into crowds, to have cold comfort at home, to lose by degrees your confidence and any talent you might possess, to grow crabbed, morose, and querulous, dissatisfied with every one, but most so with yourself; and plagued out of your life, to look about for a place to die in, and quit the world without any one's asking after your will. The *wiseacres* will possibly, however, crowd round your coffin, and raise a monument at a considerable expense, and after a lapse of time, to commemorate your genius and your misfortunes!

The only reason why I am disposed to envy the

professions of the Church or Army is, that men can afford to be poor in them without being subjected to insult. A girl with a handsome fortune in a country-town may marry a poor lieutenant without degrading herself. An officer is always a gentleman; a clergyman is something more. Echard's book *On the Contempt of the Clergy* is unfounded. It is surely sufficient for any set of individuals, raised above actual want, that their characters are not merely respectable, but sacred. Poverty, when it is voluntary, is never despicable, but takes an heroical aspect. What are the begging friars? Have they not put their base feet upon the necks of princes? Money as a luxury is valuable only as a passport to respect. It is one instrument of power. Where there are other admitted and ostensible claims to this, it becomes superfluous, and the neglect of it is even admired and looked up to as a mark of superiority over it. Even a strolling beggar is a popular character, who makes an open profession of his craft and calling, and who is neither worth a doit nor in want of one. The Scotch are proverbially poor and proud: we know they can remedy their poverty when they set about it. No one is sorry for them. The French emigrants were formerly peculiarly situated in England. The priests were obnoxious to the common people on account of their religion; both they and the nobles, for their politics. Their poverty and dirt subjected them to many rebuffs; but their privations being voluntarily incurred, and also borne with the characteristic patience and good-humour of the nation, screened them from contempt. I little thought, when I used to meet them walking out in the summer's-evenings at Somers Town, in their long great-coats, their beards covered with snuff, and their eyes gleaming with mingled hope and regret in the rays of the setting sun,

and regarded them with pity bordering on respect, as the last filmy vestige of the ancient régime, as shadows of loyalty and superstition still flitting about the earth and shortly to disappear from it for ever, that they would one day return over the bleeding corpse of their country, and sit like harpies, a polluted triumph, over the tomb of human liberty! To be a lord, a Papist, and poor, is perhaps to some temperaments a consummation devoutly to be wished. There is all the subdued splendour of external rank, the pride of self-opinion, irritated and goaded on by petty privations and vulgar obloquy to a degree of morbid acuteness Private and public annoyances must perpetually remind him of what he is, of what his ancestors were (a circumstance which might otherwise be forgotten); must narrow the circle of conscious dignity more and more, and the sense of personal worth and pretension must be exalted by habit and contrast into a refined abstraction—"pure in the last recesses of the mind"—unmixed with, or unalloyed by, "baser matter"!—It was an hypothesis of the late Mr. Thomas Wedgewood, that there is a principle of compensation in the human mind which equalises all situations, and by which the absence of anything only gives us a more intense and intimate perception of the reality; that insult adds to pride, that pain looks forward to ease with delight, that hunger already enjoys the unsavoury morsel that is to save it from perishing, that want is surrounded with imaginary riches, like the poor poet in Hogarth, who has a map of the mines of Peru hanging on his garret walls; in short, that "we can hold a fire in our hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus"—but this hypothesis, though ingenious and to a certain

*Mr. Thomas Wedgewood* (1771–1805), a friend of Coleridge.

point true, is to be admitted only in a limited and qualified sense.

There are two classes of people that I have observed who are not so distinct as might be imagined—those who cannot keep their own money in their hands, and those who cannot keep their hands from other people's. The first are always in want of money, though they do not know what they do with it. They *muddle* it away, without method or object, and without having anything to show for it. They have not, for instance, a fine house, but they hire two houses at a time; they have not a hot-house in their garden, but a shrubbery within doors; they do not gamble, but they purchase a library, and dispose of it when they move house. A princely benefactor provides them with lodgings, where, for a time, you are sure to find them at home: and they furnish them in a handsome style for those who are to come after them. With all this sieve-like economy, they can only afford a leg of mutton and a bottle of wine, and are glad to get a lift in a common stage; whereas with a little management and the same disbursements, they might entertain a round of company and drive a smart tilbury. But they set no value upon money, and throw it away on any object or in any manner that first presents itself, merely to have it off their hands, so that you wonder what has become of it. The second class above spoken of not only make away with what belongs to themselves, but you cannot keep anything you have from their rapacious grasp. If you refuse to lend them what you want, they insist that you *must*: if you let them have anything to take charge of for a time (a print or a bust) they swear that you have given it them, and that they have too great a regard for the donor ever to part with it. You

express surprise at their having run so largely in debt; but where is the singularity while others continue to lend? And how is this to be helped, when the manner of these sturdy beggars amounts to dragooning you out of your money, and they will not go away without your purse, any more than if they came with a pistol in their hand? If a person has no delicacy, he has you in his power, for you necessarily feel some towards him; and since he will take no denial, you must comply with his peremptory demands, or send for a constable, which out of respect for his character you will not do These persons are also poor—*light come, light go*—and the bubble bursts at last. Yet if they had employed the same time and pains in any laudable art or study that they have in raising a surreptitious livelihood, they would have been respectable, if not rich It is their facility in borrowing money that has ruined them. No one will set heartily to work, who has the face to enter a strange house, ask the master of it for a considerable loan, on some plausible and pompous pretext, and walk off with it in his pocket. You might as well suspect a highwayman of addicting himself to hard study in the intervals of his profession.

There is only one other class of persons I can think of, in connection with the subject of this essay—those who are always in want of money from the want of spirit to make use of it Such persons are perhaps more to be pitied than all the rest. They live in want, in the midst of plenty—dare not touch what belongs to them; are afraid to say that their soul is their own, have their wealth locked up from them by fear and meanness as effectually as by bolts and bars; scarcely allow themselves a coat to their backs or a morsel to eat; are in dread of coming to the parish all their lives, and are

not sorry when they die, to think that they shall no longer be an expense to themselves—according to the old epigram:

> Here lies Father Clarges,
> Who died to save charges!

## ON PEOPLE WITH ONE IDEA

THERE are people who have but one idea: at least, if they have more, they keep it a secret, for they never talk but of one subject.

There is Major C——: he has but one idea or subject of discourse—Parliamentary Reform. Now Parliamentary Reform is (as far as I know) a very good thing, a very good idea, and a very good subject to talk about; but why should it be the only one? To hear the worthy and gallant Major resume his favourite topic, is like law-business, or a person who has a suit in Chancery going on. Nothing can be attended to, nothing can be talked of but that. Now it is getting on; now again it is standing still; at one time the Master has promised to pass judgment by a certain day, at another he has put it off again and called for more papers, and both are equally reasons for speaking of it. Like the piece of pack-thread in the barrister's hands, he turns and twists it all ways, and cannot proceed a step without it. Some schoolboys cannot read but in their own book: and the man of one idea cannot converse out of his own subject. Conversation it is not; but a sort of recital of the preamble of a bill, or a collection of grave arguments for a man's being of opinion with himself. It would be well

*Major C——.* John Cartwright (1740–1824), major in the Nottinghamshire Militia; a writer of Parliamentary tracts.

if there was anything of character, of eccentricity in all this; but that is not the case. It is a political homily personified, a walking commonplace we have to encounter and listen to. It is just as if a man was to insist on your hearing him go through the fifth chapter of the Book of Judges every time you meet, or like the story of the Cosmogony in the *Vicar of Wakefield*. It is a tune played on a barrel-organ. It is a common vehicle of discourse into which they get and are set down when they please, without any pains or trouble to themselves Neither is it professional pedantry or trading quackery: it has no excuse The man has no more to do with the question which he saddles on all his hearers than you have. This is what makes the matter hopeless. If a farmer talks to you about his pigs or his poultry, or a physician about his patients, or a lawyer about his briefs, or a merchant about stock, or an author about himself, you know how to account for this; it is a common infirmity; you have a laugh at his expense, and there is no more to be said. But here is a man who goes out of his way to be absurd, and is troublesome by a romantic effort of generosity. You cannot say to him, "All this may be interesting to you, but I have no concern in it"; you cannot put him off in that way. He retorts the Latin adage upon you—"*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*" He has got possession of a subject which is of universal and paramount interest (not "a fee-grief, due to some single breast") —and on that plea may hold you by the button as long

*Story of the Cosmogony.* The theory of the origin of the universe —*Vicar of Wakefield.* See chap xiv. of that work

*Nihil humani a me alienum puto.* I find all that concerns humanity interesting —TERENCE.

*Fee-grief.* A personal grief.—*Macbeth*, Act IV. Sc iii

as he chooses. His delight is to harangue on what nowise regards himself: how then can you refuse to listen to what as little amuses you? Time and tide wait for no man. The business of the State admits of no delay. The question of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments stands first on the order of the day—takes precedence in its own right of every other question. Any other topic, grave or gay, is looked upon in the light of impertinence, and sent *to Coventry*. Business is an interruption; pleasure a digression from it. It is the question before every company where the Major comes, which immediately resolves itself into a committee of the whole world upon it, is carried on by means of a perpetual virtual adjournment, and it is presumed that no other is entertained while this is pending—a determination which gives its persevering advocate a fair prospect of expatiating on it to his dying day. As Cicero says of study, it follows him into the country, it stays with him at home: it sits with him at breakfast, and goes out with him to dinner. It is like a part of his dress, of the costume of his person, without which he would be at a loss what to do. If he meets you in the street, he accosts you with it as a form of salutation: if you see him at his own house, it is supposed you come upon that. If you happen to remark, "It is a fine day, or the town is full," it is considered as a temporary compromise of the question; you are suspected of not going the whole length of the principle. As Sancho when reprimanded for mentioning his homely favourite in the Duke's kitchen, defended himself by saying—"There I thought of Dapple, and there I spoke of him"—so the true stickler for Reform neglects no opportunity of introducing the subject wherever he is. Place its veteran champion under the frozen north,

and he will celebrate sweet-smiling Reform: place him under the mid-day Afric suns, and he will talk of nothing but Reform—Reform so sweetly-smiling and so sweetly-promising for the last forty years—

> Dulce ridentem Lalagen,
> Dulce loquentem!

A topic of this sort, of which the person himself may be considered as almost sole proprietor and patentee, is an estate for life, free from all incumbrance of wit, thought, [illegible]

wide world of common sense and argument. Every man's house is his castle; and every man's commonplace is his stronghold, from which he looks out and smiles at the dust and heat of controversy, raised by a number of frivolous and vexatious questions—"Rings the world with the vain stir!" A cure for this and every other evil would be a Parliamentary Reform; and so we return in a perpetual circle to the point from which we set out. Is not this species of sober madness more provoking than the real? Has not the theoretical enthusiast his mind as much warped, as much enslaved, by one idea as the acknowledged lunatic, only that the former has no lucid intervals? If you see a visionary of this class going along the street, you can tell as well what he is thinking of and will say next as the man that fancies himself a tea-pot or the Czar of Muscovy. The one is as inaccessible to reason as the other. if the one raves, the other dotes!

There are some who fancy the Corn Bill the root of all evil, and others who trace all the miseries of life to

*Dulce . . . loquentem* Sweet-smiling, sweet-tongued Lalage—HORACE.

the practice of muffling up children in night-clothes when they sleep or travel. They will declaim by the hour together on the first, and argue themselves black in the face on the last. It is in vain that you give up the point. They persist in the debate, and begin again —"But don't you see—?" These sort of partial obliquities, as they are more entertaining and original, are also by their nature intermittent. They hold a man but for a season. He may have one a year or every two years; and though, while he is in the heat of any new discovery, he will let you hear of nothing else, he varies from himself, and is amusing undesignedly. He is not like the chimes at midnight.

People of the character here spoken of, that is, who tease you to death with some one idea, generally differ in their favourite notion from the rest of the world; and indeed it is the love of distinction which is mostly at the bottom of this peculiarity. Thus one person is remarkable for living on a vegetable diet, and never fails to entertain you all dinner-time with an invective against animal food. One of this self-denying class, who adds to the primitive simplicity of this sort of food the recommendation of having it in a raw state, lamenting the death of a patient whom he had augured to be in a good way as a convert to his system, at last accounted for his disappointment in a whisper—"But she ate meat privately, depend upon it." It is not pleasant, though it is what one submits to willingly from some people, to be asked every time you meet, whether you have quite left off drinking wine, and to be complimented or condoled with on your looks according as you answer in the negative or affirmative. Abernethy thinks his pill an infallible cure for all disorders.

*Abernethy.* John Abernethy (1764–1831), a famous doctor.

A person once complaining to his physician that he thought his mode of treatment had not answered, he assured him it was the best in the world,—"and as a proof of it," says he, "I have had one gentleman, a patient with your disorder, under the same regimen for the last sixteen years!"—I have known persons whose minds were entirely taken up at all times and on all occasions with such questions as the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, the Restoration of the Jews, or the progress of Unitarianism. I myself at one period took a pretty strong turn to inveighing against the doctrine of Divine Right, and am not yet cured of my prejudice on that subject. How many projectors have gone mad i [illegible] f [illegible] c [illegible] disorder at length coming to a fatal crisis; but long before t [illegible] a [illegible] voluntary power to control or alienate their ideas from the single subject that occupied them, was gradually taking place, and overturning the fabric of the understanding by wrenching it all on one side Alderman Wood has, I should suppose, talked of nothing but the Queen in all companies for the last six months Happy Alderman Wood! Some persons have got a definition of the verb, others a system of short-hand, others a cure for typhus fever, others a method for preventing the counterfeiting of bank-notes, which they think the best possible, and indeed the only one. Others insist there have been only three great men in the world, leaving you to add a fourth. A man who had been in Germany

*Alderman Wood.* Sir Matthew Wood (1768–1843), Lord Mayor of London. He championed the cause of Queen Caroline.

will sometimes talk of nothing but what is German: a Scotchman always leads the discourse to his own country. Some descant on the Kantean philosophy. There is a conceited fellow about town who talks always and everywhere on this subject. He wears the Categories round his neck like a pearl-chain; he plays off the names of the primary and transcendental qualities like rings on his fingers. He talks of the Kantean system while he dances; he talks of it while he dines, he talks of it to his children, to his apprentices, to his customers. He called on me to convince me of it, and said I was only prevented from becoming a complete convert by one or two prejudices. He knows no more about it than a pike-staff. Why, then, does he make so much ridiculous fuss about it? It is not that he has got this one idea in his head, but that he has got no other. A dunce may talk on the subject of the Kantean philosophy with great impunity: if he opened his lips on any other, he might be found out. A French lady, who had married an Englishman who said little, excused him by saying—"He is always thinking of Locke and Newton." This is one way of passing muster by following in the *suite* of great names!—A friend of mine, whom I met one day in the street, accosted me with more than usual vivacity, and said, "Well, we're selling, we're selling!" I thought he meant a house. "No," he said, "haven't you seen the advertisement in the news-

*Kantean.* That of Emmanuel Kant (1724–1804), a famous German philosopher.

*Conceited fellow.* Probably Wirgmann, the goldsmith described in Crabb Robinson's *Diary.*

*Categories.* In Kant's philosophy, one of the twelve forms of thought that do not depend on experience.

*Friend of mine.* John Fearn (1768–1837), author of an *Essay on Consciousness.*

papers? I mean five-and-twenty copies of the Essay." This work, a comely, capacious quarto on the most abstruse metaphysics, had occupied his sole thoughts for several years, and he concluded that I must be thinking of what he was. I believe, however, I may say I am nearly the only person that ever read, certainly that ever pretended to understand it. It is an original and most ingenious work, nearly as incomprehensible as it is original, and as quaint as it is ingenious. If the author is taken up with the ideas in his own head and no others, he has a right: for he has ideas there that are to be met with nowhere else, and which occasionally would not disgrace a Berkeley. A dextrous plagiarist might get himself an immense reputation by putting them in a popular dress. Oh! how little do they know, who have never done anything but repeat after others by rote, the pangs, the labour, the yearnings, and misgivings of mind it costs, to get the germ of an original idea—to dig it out of the hidden recesses of thought and nature, and bring it half-ashamed, struggling, and deformed into the day—to give words and intelligible symbols to that which was never imagined or expressed before! It is as if the dumb should speak for the first time, as if things should stammer out their own meaning, through the imperfect organs of mere sense. I wish that some of our fluent, plausible declaimers, who have such store of words to cover the want of ideas, could lend their art to this writer. If he, "poor, unfledged" in this respect, "who has scarce winged from view o' th' nest," could find a language for his ideas, truth would find a language for some of her secrets Mr. Fearn was buried in the woods of Indostan. In his leisure from business and from tiger-shooting, he took it into his head to look into his own mind. A whim or

two, an odd fancy, like a film before the eye, now and then crossed it: it struck him as something curious, but the impression at first disappeared like breath upon glass. He thought no more of it; yet still the same conscious feelings returned, and what at first was chance or instinct, became a habit. Several notions had taken possession of his brain relating to mental processes which he had never heard alluded to in conversation, but not being well-versed in such matters, he did not know whether they were to be found in learned authors or not. He took a journey to the capital of the Peninsula on purpose, bought Locke, Reid, Stewart, and Berkeley, whom he consulted with eager curiosity when he got home, but did not find what he looked for. He set to work himself; and in a few weeks sketched out a rough draught of his thoughts and observations on bamboo paper. The eagerness of his new pursuit, together with the diseases of the climate, proved too much for his constitution, and he was forced to return to this country. He put his metaphysics, his bamboo manuscript, into a boat with him, and as he floated down the Ganges, said to himself, "If I live, this will live: if I die, it will not be heard of." What is fame to this feeling? The babbling of an idiot! He brought the work home with him, and twice had it stereotyped. The first sketch he allowed was obscure, but the improved copy he thought could not fail to strike. It did not succeed. The world, as Goldsmith said of himself, made a point of taking no notice of it. Ever since he has had nothing but disappointment and vexation—the greatest and most heartbreaking of all others—that of not being able to make yourself understood. Mr. Fearn tells me there is a sensible writer in the *Monthly Review* who sees the thing in its proper

and subtle speculations on some of the most disputed and difficult points of the philosophy of the human mind (such as *relation*, *abstraction*, etc.) than have been thrown out in any work for the last sixty years—I mean since Hume; for since his time, there has been no metaphysician in this country worth the name. Yet his *Treatise on Human Nature*, he tells us, "fell still-born from the press." So it is that knowledge works its way, and reputation lingers far behind it. But truth is better than opinion, I maintain it; and as to the two stereotyped and unsold editions of the *Essay on Consciousness*, I say "*Honi soit qui mal y pense!*"[1]—My Uncle Toby had one idea in his head, that of his bowling-green, and another, that of the Widow Wadman. Oh, spare them both! I will only add one more anecdote in illustration of this theory of the mind's being occupied with one idea, which is most frequently of a man's self. A celebrated lyrical writer happened to drop into a small party where they had just got the novel of *Rob Roy*, by the author of *Waverley*. The motto in the title-page was taken from a poem of his. This was a hint sufficient, a word to the wise. He instantly went to the bookshelf in the next room, took down the volume of his own poems, read the whole of that in question aloud with manifest complacency, replaced it

[1] Quarto poetry, as well as quarto metaphysics, does not [illegible]

*Celebrated lyrical writer.* Wordsworth.

on the shelf, and walked away; taking no more notice of *Rob Roy* than if there had been no such person, nor of the new novel than if it had not been written by its renowned author. There was no reciprocity in this. But the writer in question does not admit of any merit, second to his own.[1]

Mr. Owen is a man remarkable for one idea. It is that of himself and the Lanark cotton-mills. He carries this idea backwards and forwards with him from Glasgow to London, without allowing anything for attrition, and expects to find it in the same state of purity and perfection in the latter place as at the former. He acquires a wonderful velocity and impenetrability in his undaunted transit. Resistance to him is vain, while the whirling motion of the mail-coach remains in his head.

> Nor Alps nor Apennines can keep him out,
> Nor fortified redoubt.

He even got possession, in the suddenness of his onset, of the steam-engine of the *Times* newspaper, and struck off ten thousand wood-cuts of the Projected Villages, which afforded an ocular demonstration to all who saw

[1] These fantastic poets are like a foolish ringer at Plymouth that Northcote tells the story of. He was proud of his ringing, and the boys who made a jest of his foible used to get him in the belfry, and ask him, "Well now, John, how many good ringers are there in Plymouth?" "Two," he would say, without any hesitation. "Ay, indeed! and who are they?"—"Why, first, there's myself, that's one: and—and"——"Well, and who's the other?"—"Why there's, there's——Ecod, I can't think of any other but myself." *Talk we of one Master Launcelot.* The story is of ringers: it will do for any vain, shallow, self-satisfied egotist of them all.

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*Mr. Owen.* Robert Owen (1771-1858), philanthropist and Socialist. Attempted to found a Socialist colony at New Lanark, Scotland. Author of *New View of Society* and *A New Moral World.* One of the pioneers of Socialism and Co-operation.

them of the practicability of Mr. Owen's whole scheme. He comes into a room with one of these documents in his hand, with the air of a schoolmaster and a quack-doctor mixed; asks very kindly how you do, and on hearing you are still in an indifferent state of health owing to bad digestion, instantly turns round, and observes, "That all that will be remedied in his plan: [illegible]

shortly be generally adopted, he has provided effectually for both: that he has been long of opinion that the mind depends altogether on the physical organisation, and where the latter is neglected or disordered, the former must languish and want its due vigour: that exercise is therefore a part of his system, with full liberty to develop every faculty of mind and body: that two objections had been made to his New View of Society, *viz.*, its want of relaxation from labour, and its want of variety; but the first of these, the too great restraint, he trusted he had already answered, for where the powers of mind and body were freely exercised and brought out, surely liberty must be allowed to exist in the highest degree, and as to the second, the monotony which would be produced by a regular and general plan of co-operation, he conceived he had proved in his *New View* and *Addresses to the Higher Classes*; that the co-operation he had recommended was necessarily conducive to the most extensive improvement of the ideas and faculties, and where this was the case, there must be the greatest possible variety instead of a want of it" And having said this, this expert and sweeping orator takes up his hat and walks down-stairs after reading his lecture of

truisms like a play-bill or an apothecary's advertisement; and should you stop him at the door to say by way of putting in a word in common, that Mr. Southey seems somewhat favourable to his plan in his late Letter to Mr. William Smith, he looks at you with a smile of pity at the futility of all opposition and the idleness of all encouragement. People who thus swell out some vapid scheme of their own into undue importance, seem to me to labour under water in the head—to exhibit a huge hydrocephalus! They may be very worthy people for all that, but they are bad companions and very indifferent reasoners. Tom Moore says of someone somewhere, "That he puts his hand in his breeches' pocket like a crocodile." The phrase is hieroglyphical: but Mr. Owen and others might be said to put their foot in the question of social improvement and reform much in the same unaccountable manner.

I hate to be surfeited with anything, however sweet. I do not want to be always tied to the same question, as if there were no other in the world. I like a mind more Catholic.

> I love to talk with mariners,
> That come from a far countreé.

I am not for "a collusion" but "an exchange" of ideas. It is well to hear what other people have to say on a number of subjects. I do not wish to be always respiring the same confined atmosphere, but to vary the scene, and get a little relief and fresh air out of doors. Do all we can to shake it off, there is always enough pedantry, egotism, and self-conceit left lurking behind: we need not seal ourselves up hermetically in these precious qualities; so as to think of nothing but our own wonderful discoveries, and hear nothing but the sound of our own voice. Scholars, like princes, may

learn something by being *incognito*. Yet we see those who cannot go into a bookseller's shop, or bear to be five minutes in a stage-coach, without letting you know who they are. They carry their reputation about with them as the snail does its shell, and sit under its canopy, like the lady in the lobster. I cannot understand this at all. What is the use of a man's always revolving round his own little circle? He must, one should think, be tired of it himself, as well as tire other people. A well-known writer says with much boldness, both in the thought and expression, that "a Lord is imprisoned in the Bastile of a *name*, and cannot enlarge himself into man": and I have known men of genius in the same predicament. Why must a man be for ever mouthing out his own poetry, comparing himself with Milton, passage by passage, and weighing every line in a balance of posthumous fame which he holds in his own hands? It argues a want of imagination as well as common sense. Has he no ideas but what he has put into verse; or none in common with his hearers? Why should he think it the only scholar-like thing, the only "virtue extant," to see the merit of his writings, and that "men were brutes without them"? Why should he bear a grudge to all art, to all beauty, to all wisdom that does not spring from his own brain? Or why should he fondly imagine that there is but one fine thing in the world, namely poetry, and that he is the only poet in it? It will ne[illegible] there are other [illegible] its turn. Does [illegible] rehension by tu[illegible] e to conciliate the admiration of others by scouting, proscribing, and loathing all that they delight in? He must either have a disproportionate idea of himself, or be ignorant

of the world in which he lives. It is quite enough to have one class of people born to think the universe made for them!—It seems also to argue a want of repose, of confidence, and firm faith in a man's real pretensions to be always dragging them forward into the foreground, as if the proverb held here—"Out of sight out of mind." Does he, for instance, conceive that no one would ever think of his poetry, unless he forced it upon them by repeating it himself? Does he believe all competition, all allowance of another's merit fatal to him? Must he, like Moody in the *Country Girl*, lock up the faculties of his admirers in ignorance of all other fine things, painting, music, the antique, lest they should play truant to him? Methinks such a proceeding implies no good opinion of his own genius or their taste:—it is deficient in dignity and in decorum. Surely if anyone is convinced of the reality of an acquisition, he can bear not to have it spoken of every minute. If he knows he has an undoubted superiority in any respect, he will not be uneasy because everyone he meets is not in the secret, nor staggered by the report of rival excellence. One of the first mathematicians and classical scholars of the day was mentioning it as a compliment to himself that a cousin of his, a girl from school, had said of him—"You know M—— is a very plain good sort of a young man, but he is not anything at all out of the common." L. H. once said to me—"I wonder I never heard you speak upon this subject before, which you seem to have studied a good deal." I answered, "Why, we were not reduced to that, that I know of!"——

There are persons who, without being chargeable with the vice here spoken of, yet "stand accountant for as great a sin": though not dull and monotonous,

*M——*. Charles Lamb's friend, Thomas Manning.

they are vivacious mannerists in their conversation, and excessive egotists. Though they run over a thousand [illegible] the-Green," with a sprig of laurel, a little tinsel, and a little smut, but still playing antics and keeping in incessant motion, to attract attention and extort your [illegible] of the town [illegible], to much the [illegible] wn, its diversions, "its palaces, its ladies, and its streets," they are the delight, the grace, and ornament of it. If they are describing the charms of the country, they give no account of any individual spot or object or source of pleasure but the circumstance of their being there. "With [illegible] of beauty or grandeur to dispute the palm of perfection with their own persons. Their rural descriptions are mere landscape backgrounds with their own portraits in an engaging attitude in front. They are not observing or enjoying the scene, but doing the honours as masters of the ceremonies to nature, and arbiters of elegance to all humanity. If they tell a love-tale of enamoured princesses, it is plain they fancy themselves the hero of the piece. If they discuss poetry, their encomiums still turn on something genial and unsophisticated, meaning their own style: if they enter into politics, it is understood that a hint from them to the potentates of Europe is sufficient. In short, as a lover (talk of what you will) brings in his mistress at every turn, so

these persons contrive to divert your attention to the same darling object—they are, in fact, in love with themselves; and, like lovers, should be left to keep their own company.

## THE INDIAN JUGGLERS

COMING forward and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, nor if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it then a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous? It is the utmost stretch of human ingenuity, which nothing but the bending the faculties of body and mind to it from the tenderest infancy with incessant, ever-anxious application up to manhood, can accomplish or make even a slight approach to. Man, thou art a wonderful animal, and thy ways past finding out! Thou canst do strange things, but thou turnest them to little account!—To conceive of this effort of extraordinary dexterity distracts the imagination and makes admiration breathless. Yet it costs nothing to the performer, any more than if it were a mere mechanical deception with which he had nothing to do but to watch and laugh at the astonishment of the spectators. A single error of a hair's-breadth, of the smallest conceivable portion of time, would be fatal: the precision of the movements must be like a mathematical truth, their rapidity is like lightning. To catch four balls in succes-

sion in less than a second of time, and deliver them back so as to return with seeming consciousness to the hand again; to make them revolve round him at certain intervals, like the planets in their spheres; to make them chase one another like sparkles of fire, or shoot up like flowers or meteors; to throw them behind his [illegible]

imaginable; to laugh at, to play with the glittering mockeries, to follow them with his eye as if he could fascinate them with its lambent fire, or as if he had only to see that they kept time with the music on the stage—there is something in all this which he who does not admire may be quite sure he never really admired anything in the whole course of his life. It is skill surmounting difficulty, and beauty triumphing over skill. It seems as if the difficulty once mastered naturally resolved itself into ease and grace, and as if to be overcome at all, it must be overcome without an effort. The smallest awkwardness or want of pliancy or self-possession would stop the whole process It is the work of witchcraft, and yet sport for children. Some of the other feats are quite as curious and wonderful, such as the balancing the artificial tree and shooting a bird from each branch through a quill, though none of them have the elegance or facility of the keeping up of the brass balls. You are in pain for the result, and glad when the experiment is over; they are not accompanied with the same unmixed, unchecked delight as the former; and I would not give much to be merely astonished without being pleased at the same time. As to the swallowing of the sword, the police ought to interfere to prevent it. When I [illegible]

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do the same things before, his feet were bare, and he had large rings on the toes, which kept turning round all the time of the performance, as if they moved of themselves.—The hearing a speech in Parliament, drawled or stammered out by the Honourable Member or the Noble Lord, the ringing the changes on their common-places, which anyone could repeat after them as well as they, stirs me not a jot, shakes not my good opinion of myself: but the seeing the Indian jugglers does. It makes me ashamed of myself. I ask what there is that I can do as well as this? Nothing. What have I been doing all my life? Have I been idle, or have I nothing to show for all my labours and pains? Or have I passed my time in pouring words like water into empty sieves, rolling a stone up a hill and then down again, trying to prove an argument in the teeth of facts, and looking for causes in the dark, and not finding them? Is there no one thing in which I can challenge competition, that I can bring as an instance of exact perfection, in which others cannot find a flaw? The utmost I can pretend to is to write a description of what this fellow can do. I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell. What abortions are these Essays! What errors, what ill-pieced transitions, what crooked reasons, what lame conclusions! How little is made out, and that little how ill! Yet they are the best I can do. I endeavour to recollect all I have ever observed or thought upon a subject, and to express it as nearly as I can. Instead of writing on four subjects at a time, it is as much as I can manage to keep the thread of one discourse clear and unentangled. I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions, and polish my periods: but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do. I am fond

of arguing: yet with a good deal of pains and practice it is often as much as I can do to beat my man; though he may be a very indifferent hand. A common fencer would disarm his adversary in the twinkling of an eye, unless he were a professor like himself. A stroke of wit will sometimes produce this effect, but there is no such power or superiority in sense or reasoning. There is no complete mastery of execution to be shown there: and you hardly know the professor from the impudent pretender or the mere clown[1]

I have always had this feeling of the inefficacy and slow progress of intellectual compared to mechanical excellence, and it has always made me somewhat dissatisfied. It is a great many years since I saw Richer, the famous rope-dancer, perform at Sadler's Wells He was matchless in his art, and added to his extraordinary skill exquisite ease and unaffected natural grace. I was at that time employed in copying a half-length picture of Sir Joshua Reynolds's; and it put me out of conceit with it. How ill this part was made out in the drawing! How heavy, how slovenly this other was painted! I could not help saying to myself, "If the rope-dancer had performed his task in this manner, leaving so many

[1] The celebrated Peter Pindar (Dr Wolcot) first discovered and brought out the talents of the late Mr Opie, the painter. He was a poor Cornish boy, and was out at work in the fields, when the poet went in search of him. "Well, my lad, can you go and bring me your very best picture?" The other flew like lightning, and soon came back with what he considered as his masterpiece The stranger looked at it, and the young artist, after waiting for some time without his giving any opinion, at length exclaimed eagerly, "Well, what do you think of it?" —"Think of it?" said Wolcot, "why I think you ought to be ashamed of it—that you who might do so well, do no better!" The same answer would have applied to this artist's latest performances, that had been suggested by one of his earliest efforts.

gaps and botches in his work, he would have broke his neck long ago; I should never have seen that vigorous elasticity of nerve and precision of movement!"—Is it then so easy an undertaking (comparatively) to dance on a tight-rope? Let anyone, who thinks so, get up and try. There is the thing. It is that which at first we cannot do at all, which in the end is done to such perfection. To account for this in some degree, I might observe that mechanical dexterity is confined to doing some one particular thing, which you can repeat as often as you please, in which you know whether you succeed or fail, and where the point of perfection consists in succeeding in a given undertaking. — In mechanical efforts, you improve by perpetual practice, and you do so infallibly, because the object to be attained is not a matter of taste or fancy or opinion, but of actual experiment, in which you must either do the thing or not do it. If a man is put to aim at a mark with a bow and arrow, he must hit it or miss it, that's certain. He cannot deceive himself, and go on shooting wide or falling short, and still fancy that he is making progress. The distinction between right and wrong, between true and false, is here palpable; and he must either correct his aim or persevere in his error with his eyes open, for which there is neither excuse nor temptation. If a man is learning to dance on a rope, if he does not mind what he is about, he will break his neck. After that, it will be in vain for him to argue that he did not make a false step. His situation is not like that of Goldsmith's pedagogue:

> In argument they own'd his wondrous skill,
> And e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still.

Danger is a good teacher, and makes apt scholars. So are disgrace, defeat, exposure to immediate scorn and

laughter. There is no opportunity in such cases for self-delusion, no idling time away, no being off your guard (or you must take the consequences)—neither is there any room for humour or caprice or prejudice. If the Indian juggler were to play tricks in throwing up the three case-knives, which keep their positions like the leaves of a crocus in the air, he would cut his [illegible]

Juggernaut, when the idol issues forth on a gaudy day, he would immediately be transported into Paradise, he might believe it, and nobody could disprove it. So the Brahmins may say what they please on that subject, may build up dogmas and mysteries without end, and not be detected. but their ingenious countryman cannot persuade the frequenters of the Olympic Theatre that he performs a number of astonishing feats without actually giving proofs of what he says —There is then in this sort of manual dexterity, first a gradual aptitude acquired to a given exertion of muscular power, from constant repetition, and in the next place, an exact knowledge how much is still wanting and necessary to be supplied. The obvious test is to increase the effort or nicety of the operation, and still to find it come true. The muscles ply instinctively to the dictates of habit. Certain movements and impressions of the hand and eye, having been repeated together an infinite number of times, are unconsciously but unavoidably cemented into closer and closer union, the limbs require little more than to be put in motion for them to follow a regular track with ease and certainty; so that the mere intention of the will acts mathematically, like

touching the spring of a machine, and you come with Locksley in *Ivanhoe*, in shooting at a mark, "to allow for the wind."

Farther, what is meant by perfection in mechanical exercises is the performing certain feats to a uniform nicety, that is, in fact, undertaking no more than you can perform. You task yourself, the limit you fix is optional, and no more than human industry and skill can attain to: but you have no abstract, independent standard of difficulty or excellence (other than the extent of your own powers). Thus he who can keep up four brass balls does this *to perfection*; but he cannot keep up five at the same instant, and would fail every time he attempted it. That is, the mechanical performer undertakes to emulate himself, not to equal another.[1] But the artist undertakes to imitate another, or to do what Nature has done, and this it appears is more difficult, viz., to copy what she has set before us in the face of nature or "human face divine," entire and without a blemish, than to keep up four brass balls at the same instant; for the one is done by the power of human skill and industry, and the other never was nor will be. Upon the whole, therefore, I have more respect for Reynolds than I have for Richer; for, happen how it will, there have been more people in the world who could dance on a rope like the one than who could paint like Sir Joshua. The latter was but a bungler in his profession to the other, it is true; but then he had a harder task-master to obey, whose will was more wayward and obscure, and whose instructions it was more difficult to practise. You can put a child apprentice to a tumbler or rope-dancer with a com-

[1] If two persons play against each other at any game, one of them necessarily fails.

fortable prospect of success, if they are but sound of wind and limb: but you cannot do the same thing in painting The odds are a million to one You may make indeed as many H——s and H——s as you put into that sort of machine, but not one Reynolds amongst them all, with his grace, his grandeur, his blandness of *gusto*, "in tones and gestures hit," unless you could make the man over again To snatch this grace beyond the reach of art is then the height of art—where fine art begins, and where mechanical skill ends The soft

a moment, but dwells in the heart always, and is only seized as it passes by strong and secret sympathy, must be taught by nature and genius, not by rules or study. It is suggested by feeling, not by laborious microscopic inspection: in seeking for it without, we lose the harmonious clue to it within· and in aiming to grasp the substance, we let the very spirit of art evaporate In a word, the objects of fine art are not the objects of sight but as these last are the objects of taste and imagination, that is, as they appeal to the sense of beauty, of pleasure, and of power in the human breast, and are explained by that finer sense, and revealed in their inner structure to the eye in return. Nature is also a

eye is too blind a guide of itself to distinguish between

*H——s and H——s* Probably Haydons and Haydons Benjamin Haydon (1786–1846), a painter remarkable for the size of his pictures.

the warm or cold tone of a deep blue sky, but another sense acts as a monitor to it, and does not err. The colour of the leaves in autumn would be nothing without the feeling that accompanies it; but it is that feeling that stamps them on the canvas, faded, seared, blighted, shrinking from the winter's flaw, and makes the sight as true as touch—

> And visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Cling to each leaf and hang on every bough.

The more ethereal, evanescent, more refined and sublime part of art is the seeing nature through the medium of sentiment and passion, as each object is a symbol of the affections and a link in the chain of our endless being. But the unravelling this mysterious web of thought and feeling is alone in the Muse's gift, namely, in the power of that trembling sensibility which is awake to every change and every modification of its ever-varying impressions, that

> Thrills in each nerve, and lives along the line.

This power is indifferently called genius, imagination, feeling, taste; but the manner in which it acts upon the mind can neither be defined by abstract rules, as is the case in science, nor verified by continual unvarying experiments, as is the case in mechanical performances. The mechanical excellence of the Dutch painters in colouring and handling is that which comes the nearest in fine art to the perfection of certain manual exhibitions of skill. The truth of the effect and the facility with which it is produced are equally admirable. Up to a certain point, everything is faultless. The hand and eye have done their part. There is only a want of taste and genius. It is after we enter upon that enchanted

ground that the human mind begins to droop and flag as in a strange road, or in a thick mist, benighted and making little way with many attempts and many failures, and that the best of us only escape with half a triumph. The undefined and the imaginary are the regions that we must pass like Satan, difficult and doubtful, "half flying, half on foot." The object in sense is a positive thing, and execution comes with practice.

Cleverness is a certain *knack* or aptitude at doing certain things, which depend more on a particular adroitness and off-hand readiness than on force or perseverance, such as making puns, making epigrams, making extempore verses, mimicking the company, mimicking a style, etc. Cleverness is either liveliness and smartness, or something answering to *sleight of hand*, like letting a glass fall sideways off a table, or else a trick, like knowing the secret spring of a watch. [illegible] ments are only proper to those who are at ease in mind and fortune. I know an individual who if he had been born to an estate of five thousand a year, would have [illegible] leman of the age He [illegible] envy of the circle in [illegible] aced by his manners the liberality flowing from the openness of his heart, would have laughed with the women, have argued with the men, have said good things and written agreeable ones, have taken a hand at piquet or the lead at the harpsichord, and have set and sung his own verses—

*Individual.* Leigh Hunt.

-*nugæ canoræ*—with tenderness and spirit; a Rochester without the vice, a modern Surrey! As it is, all these capabilities of excellence stand in his way. He is too versatile for a professional man, not dull enough for a political drudge, too gay to be happy, too thoughtless to be rich. He wants the enthusiasm of the poet, the severity of the prose-writer, and the application of the man of business.—Talent is the capacity of doing anything that depends on application and industry, such as writing a criticism, making a speech, studying the law. Talent differs from genius, as voluntary differs from involuntary power. Ingenuity is genius in trifles, greatness is genius in undertakings of much pith and moment. A clever or ingenious man is one who can do anything well, whether it is worth doing or not: a great man is one who can do that which when done is of the highest importance. Themistocles said he could not play on the flute, but that he could make of a small city a great one. This gives one a pretty good idea of the distinction in question.

Greatness is great power, producing great effects. It is not enough that a man has great power in himself, he must show it to all the world in a way that cannot be hid or gainsaid. He must fill up a certain idea in the public mind. I have no other notion of greatness than this two-fold definition, great results springing from great inherent energy. The great in visible objects has relation to that which extends over space: the great in mental ones has to do with space and time. No man is truly great who is great only in his life-time. The test of greatness is the page of history. Nothing can be said to be great that has a distinct limit, or that borders on something evidently greater than itself. Besides,

*Nugæ canoræ*. Poetical trifles.

what is short-lived and pampered into mere notoriety, is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself. A Lord Mayor is hardly a great man. A city orator or patriot of the day only show, by reaching the height of their wishes, the distance they are at from any true ambition. Popularity is neither fame nor greatness. A king (as such) is not a great man. He has great power, but it is not his own. He merely wields the lever of the State, which a child, an idiot, or a madman can do. It is the office, not the man, we gaze at Anyone else in the same situation would be just as much an object of abject curiosity. We laugh at the country girl who having seen a king expressed her disappointment by saying, "Why, he is only a man!" Yet, knowing this, we run to see a king as if he was something more than a man —To display the greatest powers, unless they are applied to great purposes, makes nothing for the character of greatness. To throw a barley-corn through the eye of a needle, to multiply nine figures by nine in the memory, argues infinite dexterity of body and capacity of mind, but nothing comes of either. There is a surprising power at work, but the effects are not proportionate, or such as take hold of the imagination. To impress the idea of power on others, they must be made in some way to

on proofs from which we have no means of escaping, it is neither a slight nor a voluntary gift. A mathematician who solves a profound problem, a poet who creates an image of beauty in the mind that was not there before, imparts knowledge and power to others, in which his greatness and his fame consists, and on which it reposes.

Jedediah Buxton will be forgotten; but Napier's bones will live. Lawgivers, philosophers, founders of religion, conquerors and heroes, inventors and great geniuses in arts and sciences, are great men; for they are great public benefactors, or formidable scourges to mankind. Among ourselves, Shakespeare, Newton, Bacon, Milton, Cromwell, were great men; for they showed great power by acts and thoughts, which have not yet been consigned to oblivion. They must needs be men of lofty stature, whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. A great farce-writer may be a great man; for Molière was but a great farce-writer. In my mind, the author of *Don Quixote* was a great man. So have there been many others. A great chess-player is not a great man, for he leaves the world as he found it. No act terminating in itself constitutes greatness. This will apply to all displays of power or trials of skill, which are confined to the momentary, individual effort, and construct no permanent image or trophy of themselves without them. Is not an actor then a great man, because "he dies and leaves the world no copy?" I must make an exception for Mrs. Siddons, or else give up my definition of greatness for her sake. A man at the top of his profession is not therefore a great man. He is great in his way, but that is all, unless he shows the marks of a great moving intellect, so that we trace the master-mind, and can sympathise with the springs that urge him on. The rest is but a craft or *mystery*. John Hunter was a great man—*that* anyone might see with-

*Jedediah Buxton* (1705–80), famous for his powers of swift calculation.

*Napier's bones.* Rod used for multiplying, or dividing, by John Napier (1550–1617), a celebrated Scottish mathematician, the inventor of logarithms.

out the smallest skill in surgery. His style and manner showed the man. He would set about cutting up the carcase of a whale with the same greatness of *gusto* that Michael Angelo would have hewn a block of marble. Lord Nelson was a great naval commander; but for myself, I have not much opinion of a sea-faring life. Sir Humphry Davy is a great chemist, but I am not sure that he is a great man. I am not a bit the wiser for any of his discoveries, nor I never met with any-one that was. But it is in the nature of greatness to propagate an idea of itself, as wave impels wave, circle without circle. It is a contradiction in terms for a cox-comb to be a great man. A really great man has always an idea of something greater than himself. I have observed that certain sectaries and polemical writers have no higher compliment to pay their most shining lights than to say that "Such a one was a considerable man in his day." Some new elucidation of a text sets aside the authority of the old interpretation, and a "great scholar's memory outlives him half a century," at the utmost. A rich man is not a great man, except to his dependants and his steward. A lord is a great man in the idea we have of his ancestry, and probably *of himself, if we know nothing of him but his title.* I have heard a story of two bishops, one of whom said (speaking of St. Peter's at Rome) that when he first entered it he was rather awe-struck, but that as he walked up it, his mind seemed to swell and dilate with it, and at last to fill the whole building—the other said that as he saw more of it, he appeared to himself to grow less and less every step he took, and in the end to dwindle into nothing. This was in some respects a striking picture of a great and little mind—for greatness sympathises with greatness, and littleness shrinks

into itself. The one might have become a Wolsey; the other was only fit to become a mendicant friar—or there might have been Court reasons for making him a bishop. The French have to me a character of littleness in all about them; but they have produced three great men that belong to every country, Molière, Rabelais, and Montaigne.

To return from this digression, and conclude the Essay. A singular instance of manual dexterity was shown in the person of the late John Cavanagh, whom I have several times seen. His death was celebrated at the time in an article in the *Examiner* newspaper (7th Feb., 1819), written apparently between jest and earnest: but as it is *pat* to our purpose, and falls in with my own way of considering such subjects, I shall here take leave to quote it:

Died at his house in Burbage-street, St. Giles's, John Cavanagh, the famous hand fives-player. When a person dies, who does any one thing better than anyone else in the world, which so many others are trying to do well, it leaves a gap in society. It is not likely that anyone will now see the game of fives played in its perfection for many years to come—for Cavanagh is dead, and has not left his peer behind him. It may be said that there are things of more importance than striking a ball against a wall—there are things indeed which make more noise and do as little good, such as making war and peace, making speeches and answering them, making verses and blotting them; making money and throwing it away. But the game of fives is what no one despises who has ever played at it. It is the finest exercise for the body, and the best relaxation for the mind. The Roman poet said that "Care mounted behind the horseman and stuck to his skirts." But this remark would not have applied to the fives-player. He who takes to playing at fives is twice young. He feels neither the past nor future "in the instant." Debts, taxes, "domestic treason, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further." He

Sometimes, when he seemed preparing to send the ball

take or stop it As it was said of a great orator that he never was at a loss for a word, and for the properest word, so Cavanagh always could tell the degree of force necessary to be given to a ball, and the precise direction in which it should be sent. He did his work with the greatest ease;

Cobbett and Junius together would have made a Cavanagh. He was the best *up-hill* player in the world; even when his adversary was fourteen, he would play on the same or better, and as he never flung away the game through carelessness and conceit, he never gave it up through laziness

or want of heart. The only peculiarity of his play was that he never *volleyed*, but let the balls hop; but if they rose an inch from the ground, he never missed having them. There was not only nobody equal, but nobody second to him. It is supposed that he could give any other player half the game, or beat him with his left hand. His service was tremendous. He once played Woodward and Meredith together (two of the best players in England) in the Fives-court, St. Martin's-street, and made seven and twenty aces following by services alone—a thing unheard of. He another time played Peru, who was considered a first-rate fives-player, a match of the best out of five games, and in the three first games, which of course decided the match, Peru got only one ace. Cavanagh was an Irishman by birth, and a house-painter by profession. He had once laid aside his working-dress, and walked up, in his smartest clothes, to the Rosemary Branch to have an afternoon's pleasure. A person accosted him, and asked him if he would have a game. So they agreed to play for half-a-crown a game, and a bottle of cider. The first game began—it was seven, eight, ten, thirteen, fourteen, all. Cavanagh won it. The next was the same. They played on, and each game was hardly contested. "There," said the unconscious fives-player, "there was a stroke that Cavanagh could not take: I never played better in my life, and yet I can't win a game. I don't know how it is." However, they played on, Cavanagh winning every game, and the by-standers drinking the cider, and laughing all the time. In the twelfth game, when Cavanagh was only four, and the stranger thirteen, a person came in, and said, "What! are you here, Cavanagh?" The words were no sooner pronounced than the astonished player let the ball drop from his hand, and saying, "What! have I been breaking my heart all this time to beat Cavanagh?" refused to make another effort. "And yet, I give you my word," said Cavanagh, telling the story with some triumph, "I played all the while with my clenched fist."—He used frequently to play matches at Copenhagen-house for wagers.

*Rosemary Branch.* A tavern at Peckham.

*Copenhagen House.* A tavern and tea-garden north of London, between Maiden Lane and the old Highgate Road.

wonder to see the balance of Europe suspended in Lord

him a foot of wall, and he was sure to make the ball The four best racket-players of that day were Jack Spines, Jem Harding, Armitage, and Church Davies could give anyone of these two hands a time, that is, half the game, and each of these, at their best, could give the best player now in

*Mr. Croker*. John Croker (1780–1857), politician and contributor to the *Quarterly Review*.

London the same odds. Such are the gradations in all exertions of human skill and art. He once played four capital players together, and beat them. He was also a first-rate tennis-player, and an excellent fives-player. In the Fleet or King's Bench, he would have stood against Powell, who was reckoned the best open-ground player of his time. This last-mentioned player is at present the keeper of the Fives-court, and we might recommend to him for a motto over his door—"Who enters here, forgets himself, his country, and his friends." And the best of it is, that by the calculation of the odds, none of the three are worth remembering!—Cavanagh died from the bursting of a blood-vessel, which prevented him from playing for the last two or three years. This, he was often heard to say, he thought hard upon him. He was fast recovering, however, when he was suddenly carried off, to the regret of all who knew him. As Mr. Peel made it a qualification of the present Speaker, Mr. Manners Sutton, that he was an excellent moral character, so Jack Cavanagh was a zealous Catholic, and could not be persuaded to eat meat on a Friday, the day on which he died. We have paid this willing tribute to his memory:

> Let no rude hand deface it,
> And his forlorn "*Hic Jacet.*"

## ON LIVING TO ONE'S-SELF[1]

> Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
> Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po.

I NEVER was in a better place or humour than I am at present for writing on this subject. I have a partridge getting ready for my supper, my fire is blazing on the hearth, the air is mild for the season of the year, I have had but a slight fit of indigestion to-day (the only thing that makes me abhor myself), I have three hours

[1] Written at Winterslow Hut, January 18th–19th, 1821.

*Fleet or King's Bench.* The Fleet Prison in Farringdon Street; the King's Bench Prison in Southwark.

good before me, and therefore I will attempt it. It is as well to do it at once as to have it to do for a week to come.

If the writing on this subject is no easy task, the thing itself is a harder one. It asks a troublesome effort to ensure the admiration of others: it is a still greater one to be satisfied with one's own thoughts. As I look from the window at the wide bare heath before me, and through the misty moonlight air see the woods that wave over the top of Winterslow,

While Heav'n's chancel-vault is blind with sleet,

my mind takes its flight through too long a series of years, supported only by the patience of thought and secret yearnings after truth and good, for me to be at a loss to understand the feeling I intend to write about; but I do not know that this will enable me to convey it more agreeably to the reader.

Lady G. in a letter to Miss Harriet Byron, assures her that "her brother Sir Charles lived to himself": and Lady L. soon after (for Richardson was never tired of a good thing) repeats the same observation, to which Miss Byron frequently returns in her answers to both sisters—"For you know Sir Charles lives to himself," till at length it passes into a proverb among the fair correspondents. This is not, however, an example of what I understand by *living to one's-self*, for Sir Charles Grandison was indeed always thinking of himself; but by this phrase I mean never thinking at all about one's-self, any more than if there was no such person in existence. The character I speak of is as little of an egotist as possible: Richardson's great favourite was as much of one as possible. Some satirical critic has represented him in Elysium "bowing over the *faded* hand of Lady Grandison" (Miss Byron that was) —he ought to have been represented bowing over his

own hand, for he never admired anyone but himself, and was the god of his own idolatry. Neither do I call it living to one's-self to retire into a desert (like the saints and martyrs of old) to be devoured by wild beasts, nor to descend into a cave to be considered as a hermit, nor to get to the top of a pillar or rock to do fanatic penance and be seen of all men. What I mean by living to one's-self is living in the world, as in it, not of it: it is as if no one knew there was such a person, and you wished no one to know it: it is to be a silent spectator of the mighty scene of things, not an object of attention or curiosity in it; to take a thoughtful, anxious interest in what is passing in the world, but not to feel the slightest inclination to make or meddle with it. It is such a life as a pure spirit might be supposed to lead, and such an interest as it might take in the affairs of men, calm, contemplative, passive, distant, touched with pity for their sorrows, smiling at their follies without bitterness, sharing their affections, but not troubled by their passions, not seeking their notice, not once dreamt of by them. He who lives wisely to himself and to his own heart, looks at the busy world through the loop-holes of retreat, and does not want to mingle in the fray. "He hears the tumult, and is still." He is not able to mend it, nor willing to mar it. He sees enough in the universe to interest him without putting himself forward to try what he can do to fix the eyes of the universe upon him. Vain the attempt! He reads the clouds, he looks at the stars, he watches the return of the seasons, the falling leaves of autumn, the perfumed breath of spring, starts with delight at the note of a thrush in a copse near him, sits by the fire, listens to the moaning of the wind, pores upon a book, or discourses the freezing hours away, or melts

down hours to minutes in pleasing thought. All this while he is taken up with other things, forgetting himself. He relishes an author's style, without thinking of turning author. He is fond of looking at a print from an old picture in the room, without teasing himself to copy it. He does not fret himself to death with trying to be what he is not, or to do what he cannot. He hardly knows what he is capable of, and is not in the least concerned whether he shall ever make a figure in the world. He feels the truth of the lines:

> The man whose eye is ever on himself,
> Doth look on one, the least of nature's works;
> One who might move the wise man to that scorn
> Which wisdom holds unlawful ever—

he looks out of himself at the wide extended prospect of nature, and takes an interest beyond his narrow pretensions in general humanity. He is free as air, and independent as the wind. Woe be to him when he first begins to think what others say of him While a man is contented with himself and his own resources, all is well. When he undertakes to play a part on the stage, and to persuade the world to think more about him than they do about themselves, he is got into a track where he will find nothing but briars and thorns, vexation and disappointment. I can speak a little to this point. For many years of my life I did nothing but think. I had nothing else to do but solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side

> To see the children sporting on the shore
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore

I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing I took my time to consider whatever occurred to me, and was in no hurry to give a sophistical answer to a question—there

was no printer's devil waiting for me. I used to write a page or two perhaps in half a year; and remember laughing heartily at the celebrated experimentalist Nicholson, who told me that in twenty years he had written as much as would make three hundred octavo volumes. If I was not a great author, I could read with ever fresh delight, "never ending, still beginning," and had no occasion to write a criticism when I had done. If I could not paint like Claude, I could admire "the witchery of the soft blue sky" as I walked out, and was satisfied with the pleasure it gave me. If I was dull, it gave me little concern: if I was lively, I indulged my spirits. I wished well to the world, and believed as favourably of it as I could. I was like a stranger in a foreign land, at which I looked with wonder, curiosity, and delight, without expecting to be an object of attention in return. I had no relations to the State, no duty to perform, no ties to bind me to others: I had neither friend nor mistress, wife or child. I lived in a world of contemplation, and not of action.

This sort of dreaming existence is the best. He who quits it to go in search of realities, generally barters repose for repeated disappointments and vain regrets. His time, thoughts, and feelings are no longer at his own disposal. From .that instant he does not survey the objects of nature as they are in themselves, but looks asquint at them to see whether he cannot make them the instruments of his ambition, interest, or pleasure; for a candid, undesigning, undisguised simplicity of character, his views become jaundiced, sinister, and double: he takes no farther interest in the great changes of the world but as he has a paltry share in producing them: instead of opening his senses, his understanding, and his heart to the resplendent fabric

of the universe, he holds a crooked mirror before his face, in which he may admire his own person and pretensions, and just glance his eye aside to see whether others are not admiring him too. He no more exists in the impression which "the fair variety of things" makes upon him, softened and subdued by habitual contemplation, but in the feverish sense of his own upstart self-importance. By aiming to fix, he is become the slave of opinion He is a tool, a part of a machine that never stands still, and is sick and giddy with the ceaseless motion He has no satisfaction but in the reflection of his own image in the public gaze, but in the repetition of his own name in the public ear He himself is mixed up with, and spoils everything I wonder Buonaparte was not tired of the N.N 's stuck all over the Louvre and throughout France Goldsmith (as we all know), when in Holland, went out into a balcony with some handsome Englishwomen, and on their being applauded by the spectators, turned round, and said peevishly—"There are places where I also am admired." He could not give the craving appetite of an author's vanity one day's respite. I have seen a celebrated talker of our own time turn pale and go out of the room when a showy-looking girl has come into it, who for a moment divided the attention of his hearers. Infinite are the mortifications of the bare attempt to emerge from obscurity, numberless the failures; and greater and more galling still the vicissitudes and tormenting accompaniments of success·

—Whose top to climb
Is certain falling, or so slippery, that
The fear's as bad as falling.

*Goldsmith . . . admired.* This incident occurred at Lille The facts have been grossly exaggerated.

"Would to God," exclaimed Oliver Cromwell, when he was at any time thwarted by the Parliament, "that I had remained by my wood-side to tend a flock of sheep, rather than have been thrust on such a government as this!" When Buonaparte got into his carriage to proceed on his Russian expedition, carelessly twirling his glove, and singing the air—"Malbrook to the wars is going"—he did not think of the tumble he has got since, the shock of which no one could have stood but himself. We see and hear chiefly of the favourites of Fortune and the Muse, of great generals, of first-rate actors, of celebrated poets. These are at the head; we are struck with the glittering eminence on which they stand, and long to set out on the same tempting career: —not thinking how many discontented half-pay lieutenants are in vain seeking promotion all their lives, and obliged to put up with "the insolence of office, and the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes"; how many half-starved strolling-players are doomed to penury and tattered robes in country-places, dreaming to the last of a London engagement; how many wretched daubers shiver and shake in the ague-fit of alternate hopes and fears, waste and pine away in the atrophy of genius, or else turn drawing-masters, picture-cleaners, or newspaper critics; how many hapless poets have sighed out their souls to the Muse in vain, without ever getting their effusions farther known than the Poets'-Corner of a country newspaper, and looked and looked with grudging, wistful eyes at the envious horizon that bounded their provincial fame! Suppose an actor, for instance, "after the heart-aches and the thousand natural pangs that flesh is heir to," *does* get at the top of his profession, he can no longer bear a rival near the throne; to be second or only equal to

another, is to be nothing: he starts at the prospect of a successor, and retains the mimic sceptre with a convulsive grasp: perhaps as he is about to seize the first place which he has long had in his eye, an unsuspected competitor steps in before him, and carries off the prize, leaving him to commence his irksome toil again: he is in a state of alarm at every appearance or rumour [illegible] hardly look into a criticism unless someone has *tasted* it for him, to see that there is no offence in it: if he does not draw crowded houses every night, he can neither eat nor sleep; or if all these terrible inflictions are removed, and he can "eat his meal in peace," he then becomes surfeited with applause and dissatisfied with his profession: he wants to be something else, to be distinguished as an author, a collector, a classical scholar, a man of sense and information, and weighs every word he utters, and half retracts it before he utters it, lest if he were to make the smallest slip of the tongue, it should get buzzed abroad that Mr. —— *was only clever as an actor!* If ever there was a man who did not derive more pain than pleasure from his vanity, that man, says Rousseau, was no other than a fool. A country-gentleman near Taunton spent his whole life in making some hundreds of wretched copies of second-rate pictures, which were bought up at his death by a neighbouring baronet, to whom

Some demon whisper'd, L——, have a taste!

[1] Webster's *Duchess of Malfy*.

A little Wilson in an obscure corner escaped the man of *virtù*, and was carried off by a Bristol picture-dealer for three guineas, while the muddled copies of the owner of the mansion (with the frames) fetched thirty, forty, sixty, a hundred ducats apiece. A friend of mine found a very fine Canaletti in a state of strange disfigurement, with the upper part of the sky smeared over and fantastically variegated with English clouds; and on enquiring of the person to whom it belonged whether something had not been done to it, received for answer "that a gentleman, a great artist in the neighbourhood, had retouched some parts of it." What infatuation! Yet this candidate for the honours of the pencil might probably have made a jovial fox-hunter or respectable justice of the peace, if he could only have stuck to what nature and fortune intended him for. Miss —— can by no means be persuaded to quit the boards of the theatre at ——, a little country town in the West of England. Her salary has been abridged, her person ridiculed, her acting laughed at; nothing will serve—she is determined to be an actress, and scorns to return to her former business as a milliner. Shall I go on? An actor in the same company was visited by the apothecary of the place in an ague-fit, who, on asking his landlady as to his way of life, was told that the poor gentleman was very quiet and gave little trouble, that he generally had a plate of mashed potatoes for his dinner, and lay in bed most of his time, repeating his part. A young couple, every way amiable and deserving, were to have been married, and a benefit-play was bespoke by the officers of the regiment quartered there, to defray the expense of a licence and of the wedding-ring, but the profits of the night did not amount to the necessary sum, and they have, I fear, "virgined it e'er since"!

Oh for the pencil of Hogarth or Wilkie to give a view of the comic strength of the company at ——, drawn up in battle-array in the *Clandestine Marriage*, with a *coup d'œil* of the pit, boxes, and gallery, to cure for ever the love of the *ideal*, and the desire to shine and make holiday in the eyes of others, instead of retiring within ourselves and keeping our wishes and our thoughts at home!

Even in the common affairs of life, in love, friendship, and marriage, how little security have we when we trust our happiness in the hands of others! Most of the friends I have seen have turned out the bitterest enemies, or cold, uncomfortable acquaintance. Old companions are like meats served up too often that lose their relish and their wholesomeness. He who looks at beauty to admire, to adore it, who reads of its wondrous power in novels, in poems, or in plays, is not unwise. but let no man fall in love, for from that moment he is "the baby of a girl." I like very well to repeat such lines as these in the play of *Mirandola*:

—With what a waving air she goes
Along the corridor How like a fawn!
Yet statelier Hark! No sound, however soft,
Nor gentlest echo telleth when she treads,
But every motion of her shape doth seem
Hallowed by silence—

but however beautiful the description, defend me from meeting with the original!

The fly that sips treacle
Is lost in the sweets.
So he that tastes woman
Ruin meets

The song is Gay's, not mine, and a bitter-sweet it is.—How few out of the infinite number of those that marry

and are given in marriage wed with those they would prefer to all the world; nay, how far the greater proportion are joined together by mere motives of convenience, accident, recommendation of friends, or indeed not unfrequently by the very fear of the event, by repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination: yet the tie is for life, not to be shaken off but with disgrace or death: a man no longer lives to himself, but is a body (as well as mind) chained to another, in spite of himself:

Like life and death in disproportion met.

So Milton (perhaps from his own experience) makes Adam exclaim, in the vehemence of his despair:

For either
He never shall find out fit mate, but such
As some misfortune brings him or mistake;
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gain'd
By a far worse; or if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already link'd and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate and shame;
Which infinite calamity shall cause
To human life, and household peace confound.

If love at first sight were mutual, or to be conciliated by kind offices; if the fondest affection were not so often repaid and chilled by indifference and scorn; if so many lovers both before and since the madman in *Don Quixote* had not "worshipped a statue, hunted the wind, cried aloud to the desert"; if friendship were lasting; if merit were renown, and renown were health, riches, and long life; or if the homage of the world were paid to conscious worth and the true aspirations after excellence, instead of its gaudy signs and outward trappings: then, indeed, I might be of opinion that it is better to

live to others than one's-self: but as the case stands, I incline to the negative side of the question:[1]

> I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
> Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
> Had I not filed my mind which thus itself subdued.
>
> I have not loved the world, nor the world me—
> But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
> Though I have found them not, that there may be
> Words which are things—hopes which will not deceive,
> And virtues which are merciful nor weave
> Snares for the failing. I would also deem
> O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve,
> That two, or one, are almost what they seem—
> That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream

Sweet verse embalms the spirit of sour misanthropy: but woe betide the ignoble prose-writer who should thus *dare to compare* notes with the world, or tax it roundly with imposture.

If I had sufficient provocation to rail at the public, as Ben Jonson did at the audience in the Prologues to his plays, I think I should do it in good set terms, nearly as follows: There is not a more mean, stupid, dastardly,

[1] Shenstone and Gray were two men, one of whom pretended [illegible]
[illegible]
repose, as the other coquetted with it, merely to be interrupted with the importunity of visitors and the flatteries of absent friends.

pitiful, selfish, spiteful, envious, ungrateful animal than the Public. It is the greatest of cowards, for it is afraid of itself. From its unwieldy, overgrown dimensions, it dreads the least opposition to it, and shakes like isinglass at the touch of a finger. It starts at its own shadow, like the man in the Hartz Mountains, and trembles at the mention of its own name. It has a lion's mouth, the heart of a hare, with ears erect and sleepless eyes. It stands "listening its fears." It is so in awe of its own opinion, that it never dares to form any, but catches up the first idle rumour, lest it should be behind-hand in its judgment, and echoes it till it is deafened with the sound of its own voice. The idea of what the public will think prevents the public from ever thinking at all, and acts as a spell on the exercise of private judgment, so that in short the public ear is at the mercy of the first impudent pretender who chooses to fill it with noisy assertions, or false surmises, or secret whispers. What is said by one is heard by all; the supposition that a thing is known to all the world makes all the world believe it, and the hollow repetition of a vague report drowns the "still, small voice" of reason. We may believe or know that what is said is not true: but we know or fancy that others believe it—we dare not contradict or are too indolent to dispute with them, and therefore give up our internal, and, as we think, our solitary conviction to a sound without substance, without proof, and often without meaning. Nay more, we may believe and know not only that a thing is false, but that others believe and know it to be so, that they are quite as much in the secret of the im-

*It starts . . . Mountains.* The Brocken Spectre, a mirage that projects against the clouds the greatly enlarged silhouettes of travellers.

posture as we are, that they see the puppets at work, the nature of the machinery, and yet if anyone has the art or power to get the management of it, he shall keep possession of the public ear by virtue of a cant-phrase or nickname, and, by dint of effrontery and perseverance, make all the world believe and repeat what all the world know to be false The ear is quicker than the judgment. We know that certain things are said; by that circumstance alone we know that they produce a certain effect on the imagination of others, and we conform to their prejudices by mechanical sympathy, and for want of sufficient spirit to differ with them. So far, then, is public opinion from resting on a broad and solid basis, as the aggregate of thought and feeling in a community, that it is slight and shallow and variable to the last degree—the bubble of the moment—so that we may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent The public is pusillanimous and cowardly, because it is weak It knows itself to be a great dunce, and that it has no opinions but upon suggestion. Yet it is unwilling to appear in leading-strings, and would have it thought that its decisions are as wise as they are weighty It is hasty in taking up its favourites, more hasty in laying them aside, lest it should be supposed deficient in sagacity in either case It is generally divided into two strong parties, each of which will allow neither common sense nor common honesty to the other side It reads the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, and believes them both—or if there is a doubt, malice turns the scale Taylor and Hessey told me that they had sold nearly two editions of the *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* in about three months, but that after the *Quarterly Review* of them came out, they never sold another copy. The

public, enlightened as they are, must have known the meaning of that attack as well as those who made it. It was not ignorance, then, but cowardice that led them to give up their own opinion. A crew of mischievous critics at Edinburgh having fixed the epithet of the "Cockney School" to one or two writers born in the Metropolis, all the people in London became afraid of looking into their works, lest they, too, should be convicted of Cockneyism. Oh brave public! This epithet proved too much for one of the writers in question, and stuck like a barbed arrow in his heart. Poor Keats! What was sport to the town was death to him. Young, sensitive, delicate, he was like

> A bud bit by an envious worm,
> Ere he could spread his sweet leaves to the air,
> Or dedicate his beauty to the sun—

and unable to endure the miscreant cry and idiot laugh, withdrew to sigh his last breath in foreign climes.—The public is as envious and ungrateful as it is ignorant, stupid, and pigeon-livered—

> A huge-sized monster of ingratitudes.

It reads, it admires, it extols only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. If you have pleased it, it is jealous of its own involuntary acknowledgment of merit, and seizes the first opportunity, the first shabby pretext, to pick a quarrel with you, and be quits once more. Every petty caviller is erected into a judge, every tale-bearer is implicitly believed. Every little low paltry creature

*Cockney School.* Lockhart introduces this expression in the *Quarterly Review.* Originally applied to Leigh Hunt, it was afterwards used contemptuously with reference to Keats, Lamb, Shelley, and Hazlitt.

that gaped and wondered only because others did so, is glad to find you (as he thinks) on a level with himself. An author is not then, after all, a being of another order. Public admiration is forced, and goes against the grain. Public obloquy is cordial and sincere: every individual feels his own importance in it. They give you up bound hand and foot into the power of your accusers. To attempt to defend yourself is a high crime and misdemeanour, a contempt of court, an extreme piece of impertinence. Or, if you prove every charge unfounded, they never think of retracting their error, or making you amends. It would be a compromise of their dignity, they consider themselves as the party injured, and resent your innocence as an imputation

public are not quite so modest. People already begin to talk of the *Scotch Novels* as overrated. How, then, can common authors be supposed to keep their heads long above water? As a general rule, all those who live by the public starve, and are made a by-word and a standing jest into the bargain. Posterity is no better (not a bit more enlightened or more liberal), except that you are no longer in their power, and that the voice of common fame saves them the trouble of deciding on your claims. The public now are the posterity of Milton and Shakespeare. Our posterity will be the living public of a future generation. When a man is dead, they put money in his coffin, erect monuments to his memory, and celebrate the anniversary of his birthday in set speeches. Would they take any notice of him if he were

*Bub Doddington*, Lord Melcombe (1691–1762).

be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

> May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
> That in the various bustle of resort
> Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,

that I absent myself from the town for awhile, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a tilbury, to exchange good things with and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull commonplaces, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff of the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that

has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and [illegible]

and indulge your reveries But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others, to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's, that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an [illegible]

a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb-show, it is insipid, if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book [illegible] to the trouble [illegible] I am for the [illegible] ference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomise them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in

the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with anyone for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill-humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company seems extravagance or affectation; and on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered), is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend C——, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He

[1] *C*——. Coleridge.

[illegible]

to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had", and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:

> ——Here be woods as green
> As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
> [illegible]

*Faithful Shepherdess*

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot:—I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for Table-talk. L—— is for this

L—— Lamb

reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey, and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open-air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn"! These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea,

The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal-cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul este profani!* These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and

*Procul . . . profani!* Let no uninitiated person be present.

to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place, he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathise with him, and he breaks no squares. I associate nothing with my travelling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits, or from having someone with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world, but your "unhoused free condition is put into circumscription and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of one's-self, uncumber'd with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe ... the score of the evening—and no longer ... to be ... *arlour!* ... n this romantic state of uncertainty ... preten-

*Breaks no squares.* To leave a matter where it stood.

sions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed commonplaces that we appear in the world: an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham Common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's (I think it was), where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons, into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in the boat between me and the twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*, which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's *Camilla*. It was on the 10th of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his feelings as he first

*Gribelin's.* Simon Gribelin (1661–1733); he engraved Raphael's cartoons.

*Westall's.* Richard Westall (1765–1836).

caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bon bouche* to crown the evening with It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham, and on passing a certain point, you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash-tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream How proud, how glad I was to walk along the high-road that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE, which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze:

The beautiful is vanished, and returns not

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot, but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced! I could stand on some tall rock and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly

to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou then wert; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly anything that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions; we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nut-shell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, king-

*Sir Fopling Flutter*. In *The Man of Mode*, by Sir George Etherege.

dom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast—the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map—a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population known by the name of China to us? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life; things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence, we must pick out the single threads So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, everyone must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time, all the rest of the world is forgotten!—To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but

Stonehenge will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to; in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place"; nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

> With glistering spires and pinnacles adorn'd—

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Cicerone that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures.—As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen; there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's-

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self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support —Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied, for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones: I was at no loss for language, for that of all

travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else: but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connections Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive, but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright

existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings:

> Out of my country and myself I go.

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them: but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home!

## ON EFFEMINACY OF CHARACTER

Effeminacy of character arises from a prevalence of the sensibility over the will; or it consists in a want of fortitude to bear pain or to undergo fatigue, however urgent the occasion. We meet with instances of people who cannot lift up a little finger to save themselves from ruin, nor give up the smallest indulgence for the sake of any other person. They cannot put themselves out of their way on any account. No one makes a greater outcry when the day of reckoning comes, or affects greater compassion for the mischiefs they have occasioned; but till the time comes, they feel nothing, they care for nothing. They live in the present moment, are the creatures of the present impulse (whatever it may be)—and beyond that, the universe is nothing to them. The slightest toy countervails the empire of the world; they will not forego the smallest inclination they feel,

for any object that can be proposed to them, or any reasons that can be urged for it. You might as well ask of the gossamer not to wanton in the idle summer air, or of the moth not to play with the flame that scorches it, as ask of these persons to put off any enjoyment for a single instant, or to gird themselves up to any enterprise of pith or moment. They have been so used to a studied succession of agreeable sensations, that the shortest pause is a privation which they can by no means endure—it is like tearing them from their very existence—they have been so inured to ease and indolence, that the most trifling effort is like one of the tasks of Hercules, a thing of impossibility, at which they shudder. They lie on beds of roses, and spread their gauze wings to the sun and summer gale, and cannot bear to put their tender feet to the ground, much less to encounter the thorns and briers of the world. Life for them

——rolls o'er Elysian flowers its amber stream—

and they have no fancy for fishing in troubled waters. The ordinary state of existence they regard as something importunate and vain, and out of nature What must they think of its trials and sharp vicissitudes? Instead of voluntarily embracing pain, or labour, or danger, or death, every sensation must be wound up to the highest pitch of voluptuous refinement, every motion must be grace and elegance, they live in a luxurious, endless dream, or

Die of a rose in aromatic pain!

Siren sounds must float around them, smiling forms must everywhere meet their sight; they must tread a soft measure on painted carpets or smooth-shaven lawns, books, arts, jests, laughter, occupy every thought and

hour—what have they to do with the drudgery, the struggles, the poverty, the disease or anguish which are the common lot of humanity! These things are intolerable to them, even in imagination. They disturb the enchantment in which they are lapt. They cause a wrinkle in the clear and polished surface of their existence. They exclaim with impatience and in agony, "Oh, leave me to my repose!" How "they shall discourse the freezing hours away, when wind and rain beat dark December down," or "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm," gives them no concern—it never once enters their heads. They close the shutters, draw the curtains, and enjoy or shut out the whistling of the approaching tempest. "They take no thought for the morrow," not they. They do not anticipate evils. Let them come when they will come, they will not run to meet them. Nay more, they will not move one step to prevent them, nor let anyone else. The mention of such things is shocking; the very supposition is a nuisance that must not be tolerated. The idea of the trouble, the precautions, the negotiations necessary to obviate disagreeable consequences oppresses them to death, is an exertion too great for their enervated imaginations. They are not like Master Barnardine in *Measure for Measure*, who would not "get up to be hanged"—they would not get up to avoid being hanged. They are completely wrapped up in themselves; but then all their self-love is concentrated in the present minute. They have worked up their effeminate and fastidious appetite of enjoyment to such a pitch, that the whole of their existence, every moment of it, must be made up of these exquisite indulgences; or they will fling it all away, with indifference and scorn. They stake their entire welfare on the gratification of the passing instant.

purchase the hollow happiness of the next five minutes by a mortgage on the independence and comfort of years. They must have their will in everything, or they grow sullen and peevish like spoiled children. Whatever they set their eyes on, or make up their minds to, they must have that instant. They may pay for it hereafter. But that is no matter. They snatch a joy beyond the reach of fate, and consider the present time sacred, inviolable, unaccountable to that hard, churlish, niggard, inexorable task-master, the future. *Now or never* is their motto. They are madly devoted to the plaything, the ruling passion of the moment. What is to happen to them a week hence is as if it were to happen to them a thousand years hence. They put off the consideration for another day, and their heedless unconcern laughs at it as a fable. Their life is "a cell of ignorance, travelling a-bed" [illegible]

insect- [illegible]

folly, t [illegible]

Nothing but a miracle can rouse such people from their lethargy. It is not to be expected, nor is it even possible in the natural course of things Pope's striking exclamation:

> Oh! blindness to the future kindly given,
> That each may fill the circuit mark'd by Heaven!

hardly applies here; namely, to evils that stare us in the face, and that might be averted with the least prudence or resolution. But nothing can be done How should it? A slight evil, a distant danger will not move them; and a more imminent one only makes them turn

away from it in greater precipitation and alarm. The more desperate their affairs grow, the more averse they are to look into them; and the greater the effort required to retrieve them, the more incapable they are of it. At first, they will not do anything; and afterwards, it is too late. The very motives that imperiously urge them to self-reflection and amendment, combine with their natural disposition to prevent it. This amounts pretty nearly to a mathematical demonstration. Ease, vanity, pleasure, are the ruling passions in such cases. How will you conquer these, or wean their infatuated votaries from them? By the dread of hardship, disgrace, pain? They turn from them and you who point them out as the alternative, with sickly disgust; and instead of a stronger effort of courage or self-denial to avert the crisis, hasten it by a wilful determination to pamper the disease in every way, and arm themselves, not with fortitude to bear or to repel the consequences, but with judicial blindness to their approach. Will you rouse the indolent procrastinator to an irksome but necessary effort by showing him how much he has to do? He will only draw back the more for all your entreaties and representations. If of a sanguine turn, he will make a slight attempt at a new plan of life, be satisfied with the first appearance of reform, and relapse into indolence again. If timid and undecided, the hopelessness of the undertaking will put him out of heart with it, and he will stand still in despair. Will you save a vain man from ruin by pointing out the obloquy and ridicule that await him in his present career? He smiles at your forebodings as fantastical; or the more they are realised around him, the more he is impelled to keep out the galling conviction, and the more fondly he clings to flattery and death. He will not make a bold and resolute

attempt to recover his reputation, because that would [illegible]

talked of. The chance of success relieves the uneasiness of his apprehensions; so that he makes use of the interval only to flatter his favourite infirmity again. Would you wean a man from sensual excesses by the inevitable consequences to which they lead?—What holds more antipathy to pleasure than pain? The mind given up to self-indulgence revolts at suffering; and throws it from it as an unaccountable anomaly, as a piece of injustice when it comes. Much less will it acknowledge any affinity with or subjection to it as a mere threat. If the prediction does not immediately corr [illegible] verified, we [illegible] vices the clos [illegible] ious the more they cost us We resent wholesome counsel as an impertinence, and consider those who warn us of impending mischief as if they had brought it on our heads We cry out with the poetical enthusiast.

> And let us nurse the fond deceit;
> And what if we must die in sorrow?
> Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,
> Though grief and pain should come to-morrow?

But oh thou! who didst lend me speech when I was dumb, to whom I owe it that I have not crept on my belly all the days of my life like the serpent, but sometimes lift my forked crest or tread the empyrean, wake thou out of thy mid-day slumbers! Shake off the heavy honey-dew of thy soul, no longer lulled with that Circean cup,

*But oh thou!* Coleridge.

drinking thy own thoughts with thy own ears, but start up in thy promised likeness, and shake the pillared rottenness of the world! Leave not thy sounding words in air, write them in marble, and teach the coming age heroic truths! Up, and wake the echoes of Time! Rich in deepest lore, die not the bed-rid churl of knowledge, leaving the survivors unblest! Set, set as thou didst rise in pomp and gladness! Dart like the sun-flower one broad, golden flash of light; and ere thou ascendest thy native sky, show us the steps by which thou didst scale the Heaven of philosophy, with Truth and Fancy for thy equal guides, that we may catch thy mantle, rain-bow-dipped, and still read thy words dear to Memory, dearer to Fame!

There is another branch of this character, which is the trifling or dilatory character. Such persons are always creating difficulties, and unable or unwilling to remove them. They cannot brush aside a cobweb, and are stopped by an insect's wing. Their character is imbecility, rather than effeminacy. The want of energy and resolution in the persons last described arises from the habitual and inveterate predominance of other feelings and motives; in these it is a mere want of energy and resolution, that is, an inherent natural defect of vigour of nerve and voluntary power. There is a specific levity about such persons, so that you cannot propel them to any object, or give them a decided *momentum* in any direction or pursuit. They turn back, as it were, on the occasion that should project them forward with manly force and vehemence. They shrink from intrepidity of purpose, and are alarmed at the idea of attaining their end too soon. They will not act with steadiness or spirit, either for themselves or you. If you chalk out a line of conduct for them, or com-

mission them to execute a certain task, they are sure to conjure up some insignificant objection or fanciful impediment in the way, and are withheld from striking an effectual blow by mere feebleness of character. They may be officious, good-natured, friendly, generous in disposition, but they are of no use to anyone. They will put themselves to twice the trouble you desire, not to carry your point, but to defeat it; and, in obviating needless objections, neglect the main business. If they do what you want, it is neither at the time nor in the manner that you wish. This timidity amounts to [illegible] way of beginning a thing till the opportunity for action is lost, and are less anxious about its being done than the precise manner of doing it. They will destroy a passage sooner than let an objectionable word pass, and are much less concerned about the truth or the beauty of an image, than about the reception it will meet with from the critics. They alter what they write, not because it is, but because it may possibly be wrong, and in their tremulous solicitude to avoid imaginary blunders, run into real ones. What is curious enough is, that with all this caution and delicacy, they are continually liable to extraordinary oversights. They are, in fact, so full of all sorts of idle apprehensions, that they do not know how to distinguish real from imaginary grounds of apprehension; and they often give some unaccountable offence either from assuming a sudden boldness half in sport, or while they are secretly pluming

themselves on their dexterity in avoiding everything exceptionable; and the same distraction of motive and short-sightedness which gets them into scrapes, hinders them from seeing their way out of them. Such persons (often of ingenious and susceptible minds) are constantly at cross-purposes with themselves and others; will neither do things nor let others do them; and whether they succeed or fail, never feel confident or at their ease. They spoil the freshness and originality of their own thoughts by asking contradictory advice; and in befriending others while they are *about it and about it*, you might have done the thing yourself a dozen times over.

There is nothing more to be esteemed than a manly firmness and decision of character. I like a person who knows his own mind and sticks to it; who sees at once what is to be done in given circumstances and does it. He does not beat about the bush for difficulties or excuses, but goes the shortest and most effectual way to work to attain his own ends, or to accomplish a useful object. If he can serve you, he will do so; if he cannot, he will say so without keeping you in needless suspense, or laying you under pretended obligations. The applying to him in any laudable undertaking is not like stirring "a dish of skimmed milk." There is stuff in him, and it is of the right practicable sort. He is not all his life at hawk and buzzard whether he shall be a Whig or a Tory, a friend or a foe, a knave or a fool; but thinks that life is short, and that there is no time to play fantastic tricks in it, to tamper with principles, or trifle with individual feelings. If he gives you a character, he does not add a damning clause to it: he does not pick holes in you lest others should, or anticipate

*Hawk and buzzard.* To be uncertain, at a loss.

objections lest he should be thought to be blinded by a childish partiality. His object is to serve you; and not to play the game into your enemies' hands.

> A generous friendship no cold medium knows,
> Burns with one love, with one resentment glows.

I should be sorry for anyone to say what he did not think of me; but I should not be pleased to see him slink out of his acknowledged opinion, lest it should not be confirmed by malice or stupidity. He who is well acquainted and well-inclined to you, ought to give the tone, not to receive it from others, and may set it to what key he pleases in certain cases.

There are those of whom it has been said that to them an obligation is a reason for not doing anything, and there are others who are invariably led to do the reverse of what they should. The last are perverse, the first impracticable people. Opposed to the effeminate in disposition and manners are the coarse and brutal. As those were all softness and smoothness, these affect or are naturally attracted to whatever is vulgar and violent, harsh and repulsive in tone, in modes of speech, in forms of address, in gesture and behaviour. Thus there are some who ape the lisping of the fine lady, the drawling of the fine gentleman, and others who all their lives delight in and catch the uncouth dialect, the manners and expressions of clowns and hoydens. The last are

unpleasant reflections, and unwelcome matters of fact; as the others are all compliment and complaisance, insincerity and insipidity.

We may observe an effeminacy of style, in some degree corresponding to effeminacy of character. Writers of this stamp are great interliners of what they indite, alterers of indifferent phrases, and the plague of printers' devils. By an effeminate style I would be understood to mean one that is all florid, all fine; that cloys by its sweetness, and tires by its sameness. Such are what Dryden calls "calm, peaceable writers." They only aim to please, and never offend by truth or disturb by singularity. Every thought must be beautiful *per se*, every expression equally fine. They do not delight in vulgarisms, but in commonplaces, and dress out unmeaning forms in all the colours of the rainbow. They do not go out of their way to think—that would startle the indolence of the reader: they cannot express a trite thought in common words—that would be a sacrifice of their own vanity. They are not sparing of tinsel, for it costs nothing. Their works should be printed, as they generally are, on hot-pressed paper, with vignette margins. The Della Cruscan School comes under this description, but is now nearly exploded. Lord Byron is a pampered and aristocratic writer, but he is not effeminate, or we should not have his works with only the printer's name to them! I cannot help thinking that the fault of Mr. Keats's poems was a deficiency in masculine energy of style. He had beauty, tenderness, delicacy, in an uncommon degree, but there was a want of strength and substance. His *Endymion* is a very delightful description of the illusions of a youthful imagination, given up to airy dreams—we have flowers, clouds, rainbows, moonlights, all sweet sounds and smells, and

*Della Cruscan School.* A famous Florentine Literary Academy, established to maintain the purity of the Italian language. The pedantry of its pronouncements long crippled Italian literature.

reads and Dryads flitting by—but there is nothing ngible in it, nothing marked or palpable—we have one of the hardy spirit or rigid forms of antiquity. He ainted his own thoughts and character; and did not ransport himself into the fabulous and heroic ages. There is a want of action, of character, and so far, of imagination, but there is exquisite fancy. All is soft and fleshy, without bone or muscle. We see in him the youth, without the manhood of poetry. His genius breathed "vernal delight and joy."—"Like Maia's son he stood and shook his plumes," with fragrance filled. His mind was redolent of spring He had not the fierceness of summer, nor the richness of autumn, and winter he seemed not to have known, till he felt the icy hand of death!

## WHY DISTANT OBJECTS PLEASE

Distant objects please, because, in the first place, they imply an idea of space and magnitude, and because, not being obtruded too close upon the eye, we clothe them with the indistinct and airy colours of fancy In looking at the misty mountain-tops that bound the horizon, the mind is as it were conscious of all the conceivable objects and interests that lie between, we imagine all sorts of adventures in the interim, strai our hopes and wishes to reach the air-drawn circle, o to "descry new lands, rivers, and mountains," stretch ing far beyond it: our feelings carried out of themselve lose their grossness and their husk, are rarefied, e panded, melt into softness and brighten into beaut turning to ethereal mould, sky-tinctured We drink t

air before us, and borrow a more refined existence from objects that hover on the brink of nothing. Where the landscape fades from the dull sight, we fill the thin, viewless space with shapes of unknown good, and tinge the hazy prospect with hopes and wishes and more charming fears.

> But thou, oh Hope! with eyes so fair,
> What was thy delighted measure?
> Still it whisper'd promised pleasure,
> And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail!

Whatever is placed beyond the reach of sense and knowledge, whatever is imperfectly discerned, the fancy pieces out at its leisure; and all but the present moment, but the present spot, passion claims for its own, and brooding over it with wings outspread, stamps it with an image of itself. Passion is lord of infinite space, and distant objects please because they border on its confines, and are moulded by its touch. When I was a boy, I lived within sight of a range of lofty hills, whose blue tops blending with the setting sun had often tempted my longing eyes and wandering feet. At last I put my project in execution, and on a nearer approach, instead of glimmering air woven into fantastic shapes, found them huge lumpish heaps of discoloured earth. I learnt from this (in part) to leave "Yarrow unvisited," and not idly to disturb a dream of good!

Distance of time has much the same effect as distance of place. It is not surprising that fancy colours the prospect of the future as it thinks good, when it even effaces the forms of memory. Time takes out the sting of pain; our sorrows after a certain period have been so often steeped in a medium of thought and passion, that they "unmould their essence"; and all that remains of our original impressions is what we would wish them to have

been. Not only the untried steep ascent before us, but the rude, unsightly masses of our past experience presently resume their power of deception over the eye: the golden cloud soon rests upon their heads, and the *purple light of fancy* clothes their barren sides! Thus we pass on, while both ends of our existence touch upon Heaven!—There is (so to speak) "a mighty stream of tendency" to good in the human mind, upon which all objects float and are imperceptibly borne along: and though in the voyage of life we meet with strong rebuffs, with rocks and quicksands, yet there is "a tide in the affairs of men," a heaving and a restless aspiration of the soul, by means of which, "with sails and tackle torn," the wreck and scattered fragments of our entire being drift into the port and haven of our desires! In all that relates to the *affections*, we put the will for the deed:—so that the instant the pressure of unwelcome circumstances is removed, the mind recoils from their hold, recovers its elasticity, and reunites itself to that image of good which is but a reflection and configuration of its own nature. Seen in the distance, in the long perspective of waning years, the *meanest incidents*, enlarged and enriched by *countless recollections*, become interesting; the most painful, broken and softened by time, soothe How any object that unexpectedly brings back to us old scenes and associations startles the mind! What a yearning it creates within us, what a longing to leap the intermediate space! How fondly we cling to and try to revive the impression of all that we then were!

Such tricks hath strong imagination!

In truth, we impose upon ourselves, and know not what we wish. It is a *cunning* artifice, a quaint delusion, by which, in *pretending* to be what we were at a particular

moment of time, we would fain be all that we have since been, and have our lives to come over again. It is not the little, glimmering, almost annihilated speck in the distance that rivets our attention and "hangs upon the beatings of our hearts": it is the interval that separates us from it, and of which it is the trembling boundary, that excites all this coil and mighty pudder in the breast. Into that great gap in our being "come thronging soft desires" and infinite regrets. It is the contrast, the change from what we then were, that arms the half-extinguished recollection with its giant-strength, and lifts the fabric of the affections from its shadowy base. In contemplating its utmost verge, we overlook the map of our existence, and re-tread, in apprehension, the journey of life. So it is that in early youth we strain our eager sight after the pursuits of manhood; and, as we are sliding off the stage, strive to gather up the toys and flowers that pleased our thoughtless childhood.

When I was quite a boy, my father used to take me to the Montpelier Tea-gardens at Walworth. Do I go there now? No; the place is deserted, and its borders and its beds o'erturned. Is there, then, nothing that can

> Bring back the hour
> Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower?

Oh! yes. I unlock the casket of memory, and draw back the warders of the brain; and there this scene of my infant wanderings still lives unfaded, or with fresher dyes. A new sense comes upon me, as in a dream; a richer perfume, brighter colours start out; my eyes dazzle; my heart heaves with its new load of bliss, and I am a child again. My sensations are all glossy, spruce, voluptuous, and fine: they wear a candied coat, and are

*Pudder.* Trouble, confusion.

in holiday trim. I see the beds of larkspur with purple eyes; tall holy-oaks, red and yellow; the broad sunflowers, caked in gold, with bees buzzing round them; [illegible]

now with sparkling looks; or have they vanished while I have been writing this description of them? No matter, they will return again when I least think of them. All that I have observed since, of flowers and plants, and grass-plots, and of suburb delights, seems, to me, borrowed from "that first garden of my innocence"—to be slips and scions stolen from that bed of memory. In this manner the darlings of our childhood burnish out in the eye of after-years, and derive their sweetest perfume from the first heartfelt sigh of pleasure breathed upon them,

> ——like the sweet south,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour!

If I have pleasure in a flower-garden, I have in a kitchen-garden, too, and for the same reason. If I see a row of cabbage-plants or of peas or beans coming up, I immediately think of those which I used so carefully to water of an evening at W——m, when my day's tasks were done, and of the pain with which I saw them droop and hang down their leaves in the morning's sun. Again, I never see a child's kite in the air but it seems to pull at my heart. It is to me a "thing of life." I feel the twinge at my elbow, the flutter and palpitation, with which I used to let go the string of my own, as it rose in the

*W——m*. Wem

air and towered among the clouds. My little cargo of hopes and fears ascended with it; and as it made a part of my own consciousness then, it does so still, and appears "like some gay creature of the element," my playmate when life was young, and twin-born with my earliest recollections. I could enlarge on this subject of childish amusements, but Mr. Leigh Hunt has treated it so well, in a paper in the *Indicator*, on the productions of the toy-shops of the Metropolis, that if I were to insist more on it, I should only pass for an imitator of that ingenious and agreeable writer, *and for an indifferent one into the bargain*.

Sounds, smells, and sometimes tastes, are remembered longer than visible objects, and serve, perhaps, better for links in the chain of association. The reason seems to be this: they are in their nature intermittent and comparatively rare; whereas objects of sight are always before us, and, by their continuous succession, drive one another out. The eye is always open; and between any given impression and its recurrence a second time, fifty thousand other impressions have, in all likelihood, been stamped upon the sense and on the brain. The other senses are not so active or vigilant. They are but seldom called into play. The ear, for example, is oftener courted by silence than noise; and the sounds that break that silence sink deeper and more durably into the mind. I have a more present and lively recollection of certain scents, tastes, and sounds, for this reason, than I have of mere visible images, because they are more original, and less worn by frequent repetition. Where there is nothing interposed between any two impressions, whatever the distance of time that parts them, they naturally seem to touch; and the renewed impression recalls the

*Indicator*. In the essay "A Nearer View of some of the Shops."

former one in full force, without distraction or competitor. The taste of barberries, which have hung out in the snow during the severity of a North American winter, I have in my mouth still, after an interval of thirty years; for I have met with no other taste, in all that time, at all like it. It remains by itself, almost like the impression of a sixth sense. But the colour is mixed up indiscriminately with the colours of many other berries, nor should I be able to distinguish it among them. The smell of a brick-kiln carries the evidence of its own identity with it: neither is it to me (from peculiar associations) unpleasant. The colour of brick-dust, on the contrary, is more common and easily confounded with other colours. Raphael did not keep it quite distinct from his flesh-colour. I will not say that we have a more perfect recollection of the human voice than of that complex picture the human face, but I think the sudden hearing of a well-known voice has something in it more affecting and striking than the sudden meeting with the face: perhaps, indeed, this may be because we have a more familiar remembrance of the one than the other, and the voice takes us more by surprise on that account. I am by no means certain (generally speaking) that we have the ideas of the other senses so accurate and well-made out as those of visible form: what I chiefly mean is, that the feelings belonging to the sensations of our other organs, when accidentally recalled, are kept more separate and pure Musical sounds, probably, owe a good deal of their interest and romantic effect to the principle here spoken of. Were they constant, they would become indifferent, as we may find with respect to disagreeable noises, which we do not hear after a time. I know no situation more pitiable than that of a blind fiddler, who has but one sense left

(if we except the sense of snuff-taking[1]) and who has that stunned or deafened by his own villainous noises. Shakespeare says:

How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night!

It has been observed, in explanation of this passage, that it is because in the daytime lovers are occupied with one another's faces, but that at night they can only distinguish the sound of each other's voices. I know not how this may be: but I have, ere now, heard a voice break so upon the silence,

To angels' 'twas most like,

and charm the moonlight air with its balmy essence, that the budding leaves trembled to its accents. Would I might have heard it once more whisper peace and hope (as erst when it was mingled with the breath of spring), and with its soft pulsations lift winged fancy to heaven! But it has ceased, or turned where I no more shall hear it!—Hence, also, we see what is the charm of the shepherd's pastoral reed; and why we hear him, as it were, piping to his flock, even in a picture. Our ears are fancy-stung! I remember once strolling along the margin of a stream, skirted with willows and plashy sedges, in one of those low sheltered valleys on Salisbury Plain, where the monks of former ages had planted chapels and built hermits' cells. There was a little parish church near, but tall elms and quivering alders hid it from my sight, when, all of a sudden, I was startled by the sound of the full organ pealing on the ear, accompanied by rustic voices and the willing choir of village maids and children. It rose, indeed, "like an exhalation of rich distilled perfumes." The dew from a thousand pastures was gathered in its softness; the silence of a thousand years spoke in

[1] See Wilkie's "Blind Fiddler."

it. It came upon the heart like the calm beauty of death: fancy caught the sound, and faith mounted on it to the skies. It filled the valley like a mist, and still poured out its endless chant, and still it swells upon the ear, and wraps me in a golden trance, drowning the noisy tumult of the world!

There is a curious and interesting discussion, on the comparative distinctness of our visual and other external impressions, in Mr. Fearn's *Essay on Consciousness*, with which I shall try to descend from this rhapsody to the ground of common sense and plain reasoning again. After observing, a little before, that "nothing is more untrue than that sensations of vision do necessarily leave more vivid and durable ideas than those of grosser senses," he proceeds to give a number of illustrations in support of this position

I remember having once, and only once, eat kangaroo in New Holland; and having once smelled a baker's shop,

*New Holland*. Australia

having a peculiar odour, in the city of Bassorah. Now both these gross ideas remain with me quite as vivid as any visual ideas of those places; and this could not be from repetition, but really from interest in the sensation.

Twenty-eight years ago, in the island of Jamaica, I partook (perhaps twice) of a certain fruit, of the taste of which I have now a very fresh idea; and I could add other instances of that period.

I have had repeated proofs of having lost retention of visual objects, at various distances of time, though they had once been familiar. I have not, during thirty years, forgot the delicate, and in itself most trifling sensation, that the palm of my hand used to convey, when I was a boy, trying the different effects of what boys call *light* and *heavy* tops; but I cannot remember within several shades of the brown coat which I left off a week ago. If any man thinks he can do better, let him take an ideal survey of his wardrobe, and then actually refer to it for proof.

After retention of such ideas, it certainly would be very difficult to persuade me that feeling, taste, and smell can scarce be said to leave ideas, unless indistinct and obscure ones. . . .

Show a Londoner correct models of twenty London churches, and, at the same time, a model of each, which differs, in several considerable features, from the truth, and I venture to say he shall not tell you, in any instance, which is the correct one, except by mere chance.

If he is an architect, he may be much more correct than any ordinary person: and this obviously is, because he has felt an interest in viewing these structures, which an ordinary person does not feel: and here interest is the sole reason of his remembering more correctly than his neighbour.

I once heard a person quaintly ask another, How many trees there are in St. Paul's Churchyard? The question itself indicates that many cannot answer it; and this is found to be the case with those who have passed the church an hundred times: whilst the cause is, that every individual in the busy stream which glides past St. Paul's is engrossed in various other interests.

How often does it happen that we enter a well-known

apartment, or meet a well-known friend, and receive some vague idea of visible difference, but cannot possibly find out *what* it is; until at length we come to perceive (or perhaps must be told) that some ornament or furniture is removed, altered, or added in the apartment; or that our friend has cut his hair, taken a wig, or has made any of

terest, can retain tolerably exact copies of sensations, especially if not too complex; such as of the human countenance and figure. Yet the voice will convince us, when the countenance will not; and he is reckoned an excellent painter, and no ordinary genius, who can make a tolerable likeness from memory Nay, more, it is a conspicuous proof of the inaccuracy of visual ideas, that it is an effort of consummate art, attained by many years' practice, to take a strict likeness of the human countenance, even when the object is present; and among those cases, where the wilful

has not the same character it had yesterday, though both these are compounds

Beyond all this I may observe, that a draper, who is in the daily habit of such comparisons, cannot carry in his mind the particular shade of a colour during a second of time; and has no certainty of tolerably matching two simple colours, except by placing the patterns in contact —*Essay on Consciousness*, p 303

I will conclude the subject of this Essay with observing,

*Appostled with* With the addition of

that (as it appears to me) a nearer and more familiar acquaintance with persons has a different and more favourable effect than that with places or things. The latter improve (as an almost universal rule) by being removed to a distance: the former, generally at least, gain by being brought nearer and more home to us. Report or imagination seldom raises any individual so high in our estimation as to disappoint us greatly when we are introduced to him: prejudice and malice constantly exaggerate defects beyond the reality. Ignorance alone makes monsters or bugbears: our actual acquaintances are all very commonplace people. The thing is, that as a matter of hearsay or conjecture, we make abstractions of particular vices, and irritate ourselves against some particular quality or action of the person we dislike: whereas, individuals are concrete existences, not arbitrary denominations or nicknames; and have innumerable other qualities, good, bad, and indifferent, besides the damning feature with which we fill up the portrait or caricature, in our previous fancies. We can scarcely hate anyone that we know. An acute observer complained, that if there was anyone to whom he had a particular spite, and a wish to let him see it, the moment he came to sit down with him, his enmity was disarmed by some unforeseen circumstance. If it was a Quarterly Reviewer, he was in other respects like any other man. Suppose, again, your adversary turns out a very ugly man, or wants an eye, you are balked in that way: he is not what you expected, the object of your abstract hatred and implacable disgust. He may be a very disagreeable person, but he is no longer the same. If you come into a room where a man is, you find, in general, that he has a nose upon his face. "There's sympathy!" This alone is a diversion to your unqualified

party-writer; but you find that the man himself is a tame sort of animal enough. He does not bite. That's

a nearer acquaintance, what you did not know before—

the hand, speaks kindly to servants, and supports an aged father and mother. Politics apart, he is a very honest fellow. You are told that a person has carbuncles on his face; but you have ocular proofs that he is sallow, and pale as a ghost. This does not much mend the matter

where you were. I am not very fond of anonymous criticism; I want to know who the author can be: but the moment I learn this, I am satisfied. Even —— would do well to come out of his disguise It is the mask only that we dread and hate: the man may have something human about him! The notions, in short, which we entertain of people at a distance, or from partial representations, or from guess-work, are simple, uncompounded ideas, which answer to nothing in reality: those which we derive from experience are mixed modes,

*He is* —— Probably Lockhart

the only true, and, in general, the most favourable ones. Instead of naked deformity, or abstract perfection—

Those faultless monsters which the world ne'er saw,—

"the web of our lives is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipt them not; and our vices would despair, if they were not encouraged by our virtues." This was truly and finely said long ago, by one who knew the strong and weak points of human nature: but it is what sects, and parties, and those philosophers whose pride and boast it is to classify by nicknames, have yet to learn the meaning of!

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

SIR WALTER SCOTT is undoubtedly the most popular writer of the age—the "lord of the ascendant" for the time being. He is just half what the human intellect is capable of being: if you take the universe, and divide it into two parts, he knows all that it *has been*; all that it *is to be* is nothing to him. His is a mind brooding over antiquity—scorning "the present ignorant time." He is *laudator temporis acti*—a "*prophesier* of things past." The old world is to him a crowded map; the new one a dull, hateful blank. He dotes on all well-authenticated superstitions; he shudders at the shadow of innovation. His retentiveness of memory, his accumulated weight of interested prejudice or romantic association have overlaid his other faculties. The cells of his memory are vast, various, full even to bursting with life and motion; his speculative understanding is empty, flaccid,

*Laudator temporis acti*. One who praises the past.

mechanically shrinks back as from the edge of a precipice. The land of pure reason is to his apprehension like *Van Diemen's Land*— barren, miserable, distant, a place of exile, the dreary abode of savages, convicts, and adventurers. Sir Walter would make a bad hand of a description of the *Millennium*, unless he could lay the scene in Scotland five hundred years ago, and then he

stands still, as the material one was supposed to do of
old—and that
we actually
everything cha
three hundred years ago to what it is now—from what it is now to all that the bigoted admirer of the good old times most dreads and hates!

It is long since we read, and long since we thought of our author's poetry. It would probably have gone out of date with the immediate occasion, even if he himself had not contrived to banish it from our recollection It is not to be denied that it had great merit, both of an obvious and intrinsic kind. It abounded in vivid descriptions, in spirited action, in smooth and flowing versification. But it wanted *character*. It was "poetry of no mark or likelihood." It slid out of the mind as soon as read, like a river, and would have been forgotten, but that the public curiosity was fed with ever new supplies from the same teeming liquid source It is not every man that can write six quarto volumes in verse, that are caught up with avidity, even by fastidious

judges. But what a difference between *their* popularity and that of the *Scotch Novels*! It is true, the public read and admired the *Lay of the last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and so on, and each individual was contented to read and admire because the public did so: but with regard to the prose-works of the same (supposed) author, it is quite *another-guess* sort of thing. Here everyone stands forward to applaud on his own ground, would be thought to go before the public opinion, is eager to extol his favourite characters louder, to understand them better than everybody else, and has his own scale of comparative excellence for each work, supported by nothing but his own enthusiastic and fearless convictions. It must be amusing to the author of *Waverley* to hear his readers and admirers (and are not these the same thing?[1]) quarrelling which of his novels is the best, opposing character to character, quoting passage against passage, striving to surpass each other in the extravagance of their encomiums, and yet unable to settle the precedence, or to do the author's writings justice—so various, so equal, so transcendent are their merits! His volumes of poetry were received as fashionable and well-dressed acquaintances: we are ready to tear the others in pieces as old friends. There was something meretricious in Sir Walter's ballad-rhymes; and like those who keep opera *figurantes*, we were willing to have our admiration shared, and our taste confirmed by the

[1] No! For we met with a young lady who kept a circulating library and a milliner's shop, in a watering-place in the country, who, when we inquired for the *Scotch Novels*, spoke indifferently about them, said they were "so dry she could hardly get through them," and recommended us to read *Agnes*. We never thought of it before, but we would venture to lay a wager that there are many other young ladies in the same situation, and who think *Old Mortality* dry.

town: but the Novels are like the betrothed of our hearts, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and we are jealous that anyone should be as much delighted or as thoroughly acquainted with their beauties as ourselves. For which of his poetical heroines would the reader break a lance so soon as for Jeanie Deans? What *Lady of the Lake* can compare with the beautiful Rebecca? We believe the late Mr. John Scott went to his death-bed (though a painful and premature one) with some degree of satisfaction, inasmuch as he had penned the most [illegible]

incisions into character are "skinned and filmed over" —the details are lost or shaped into flimsy and insipid decorum; and the truth of feeling and of circumstance is translated into a tinkling sound, a tinsel *commonplace.* It must be owned there is a power in true poetry that lifts the mind from the ground of reality to a higher sphere, that penetrates the inert, scattered, incoherent materials presented to it, and by a force and inspiration of its own, melts and moulds them into sublimity and beauty. But Sir Walter (we contend, under correction) has not this creative impulse, this plastic power, this capacity of reacting on his first impressions. He is a learned, a literal, a *matter-of-fact* expounder of truth or fable:[1] he does not soar above and look down upon his subject, imparting his own lofty views and feelings

[1] Just as Cobbett is a matter-of-fact reasoner

*Mr. John Scott.* John Scott (1783–1821), editor of the *London Magazine.* He died of a wound received in a duel with Christie, the friend of Lockhart The two had met in consequence of a quarrel between *Blackwood's* and the *London Magazine.*

his descriptions of nature—he relies upon it, is raised by it, is one with it, or he is nothing. A poet is essentially a *maker*; that is, he must atone for what he loses in individuality and local resemblance by the energies and resources of his own mind. The writer of whom we speak is deficient in these last. He has either not the faculty or not the will to impregnate his subject by an effort of pure invention. The execution also is much upon a par with the more ephemeral effusions of the press. It is light, agreeable, effeminate, diffuse. Sir Walter's Muse is a *Modern Antique*. The smooth, glossy texture of his verse contrasts happily with the quaint, uncouth, rugged materials of which it is composed; and takes away any appearance of heaviness or harshness from the body of local traditions and obsolete costume. We see grim knights and iron armour; but then they are woven in silk with a careless, delicate hand, and have the softness of flowers. The poet's figures might be compared to old tapestries copied on the finest velvet—they are not like Raphael's *Cartoons*, but they are very like Mr. Westall's drawings, which accompany, and are intended to illustrate them. This facility and grace of execution is the more remarkable, as a story goes that not long before the appearance of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* Sir Walter (then Mr.) Scott, having, in the company of a friend, to cross the Firth of Forth in a ferry-boat, they proposed to beguile the time by writing a number of verses on a given subject, and that at the end of an hour's hard study they found they had produced only six lines between them. "It is plain," said

*Mr. Westall's*. Richard Westall (1765–1836), illustrated *Marmion* and *The Lord of the Isles*.

*Story goes*. This story is very improbable, as Scott had (in 1802–3) written the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders*.

the unconscious author to his fellow-labourer, "that you and I need never think of getting our living by writing poetry!" In a year or so after this, he set to work, and poured out quarto upon quarto, as if they had been drops of water. As to the rest, and compared with true and great poets, our Scottish Minstrel is but "a metre balladmonger." We would rather have written one song of Burns, or a single passage in Lord Byron's *Heaven and Earth*, or one of Wordsworth's "fancies and good-nights," than all his epics What is he to Spenser, over whose immortal, ever-amiable verse beauty hovers and trembles, and who has shed the purple light of Fancy, from his ambrosial wings, over all nature? What is there of the might of Milton, whose head is canopied in the blue serene, and who takes us to sit with him there? What is there (in his ambling rhymes) of the deep pathos of Chaucer? Or of the o'er-informing power of Shakespeare, whose eye, watching alike the minutest traces of characters and the strongest movements of passion, "glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," and with the lambent flame of genius, playing round each object, lights up the universe in a robe of its own radiance? Sir Walter has no voluntary power of combination: all his associations (as we said before) are those of habit or of tradition. He is a mere narrative and descriptive poet, garrulous of the old time. The definition of his poetry is a pleasing superficiality.

Not so of his Novels and Romances. There we turn over a new leaf—another and the same—the same in matter, but in form, in power how different! The author of *Waverley* has got rid of the tagging of rhymes, the eking out of syllables, the supplying of epithets, the colours of style, the grouping of his characters, and the

regular march of events, and comes to the point at once, and strikes at the heart of his subject, without dismay and without disguise. His poetry was a lady's waiting-maid, dressed out in cast-off finery: his prose is a beautiful, rustic nymph, that, like Dorothea in *Don Quixote*, when she is surprised with dishevelled tresses bathing her naked feet in the brook, looks round her, abashed at the admiration her charms have excited! The grand secret of the author's success in these latter productions is that he has completely got rid of the trammels of authorship; and torn off at one rent (as Lord Peter got rid of so many yards of lace in the *Tale of a Tub*) all the ornaments of fine writing and worn-out sentimentality. All is fresh, as from the hand of nature: by going a century or two back and laying the scene in a remote and uncultivated district, all becomes new and startling in the present advanced period.—Highland manners, characters, scenery, superstitions, Northern dialect and costume, the wars, the religion, and politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, give a charming and wholesome relief to the fastidious refinement and "over-laboured lassitude" of modern readers, like the effect of plunging a nervous valetudinarian into a cold bath. The *Scotch Novels*, for this reason, are not so much admired in Scotland as in England. The contrast, the transition is less striking. From the top of the Calton Hill, the inhabitants of "Auld Reekie" can descry, or fancy they descry, the peaks of Ben Lomond and the waving outline of Rob Roy's country: we who live at the southern extremity of the island can only catch a glimpse of the billowy scene in the descriptions of the author of *Waverley*. The mountain air is most bracing

*Lord Peter*. A mistake; Martin, not Lord Peter, did this. See *Tale of a Tub*, sect. 7.

to our languid nerves, and it is brought us in ship-loads from the neighbourhood of Abbotsford. There is another circumstance to be taken into the account. In Edinburgh there is a little opposition and something of the spirit of cabal between the partisans of works proceeding from Mr. Constable's and Mr. Blackwood's shops. Mr. Constable gives the highest prices; but being a Whig bookseller, it is grudged that he should do so. An attempt is therefore made to transfer a certain share of popularity to the second-rate Scotch novels, "the embryo fry, the little airy of *ricketty* children," issuing through Mr. Blackwood's shop-door. This operates a diversion, which does not affect us here. The author of *Waverley* wears the palm of legendary lore alone. Sir Walter may, indeed, surfeit us: his imitators make us sick! It may be asked, it has been asked, "Have
Must we look
s original and
"Yes!" Every
y every move-
ment of the social machine is calculable. We have no

clipped hedges, and repose in camp-beds, and do not perch on crags, like eagles, or take shelter, like seamews, in basaltic subterranean caverns. We have heaths with rude heaps of stones upon them: but no existing superstition converts them into the Geese of Micklestane Moor, or sees a Black Dwarf groping among them.

We have sects in religion: but the only thing sublime or ridiculous in that way is Mr Irving, the Caledonian

preacher, who "comes like a satyr staring from the woods, and yet speaks like an orator!" We had a Parson Adams not quite a hundred years ago—a Sir Roger de Coverley rather more than a hundred! Even Sir Walter is ordinarily obliged to pitch his angle (strong as the hook is) a hundred miles to the North of the "Modern Athens" or a century back. His last work,[1] indeed, is mystical, is romantic in nothing but the title-page. Instead of "a holy-water sprinkle dipped in dew," he has given us a fashionable watering-place—and we see what he has made of it. He must not come down from his fastnesses in traditional barbarism and native rusticity; the level, the littleness, the frippery of modern civilisation will undo him as it has undone us!

Sir Walter has found out (oh, rare discovery) that facts are better than fiction; that there is no romance like the romance of real life; and that if we can but arrive at what men feel, do, and say in striking and singular situations, the result will be "more lively, audible, and full of vent" than the fine-spun cobwebs of the brain. With reverence be it spoken, he is like the man who having to imitate the squeaking of a pig upon the stage, brought the animal under his coat with him. Our author has conjured up the actual people he has to deal with, or as much as he could get of them, in "their habits as they lived." He has ransacked old chronicles, and poured the contents upon his page; he has squeezed out musty records; he has consulted wayfaring pilgrims, bed-rid sibyls; he has invoked the spirits of the air; he has conversed with the living and the dead, and let them tell their story their own way; and by borrowing of others, has enriched his own genius with everlasting variety, truth, and freedom. He has taken his materials from the original,

[1] *St. Ronan's Well.*

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[1] *St. Ronan's Well.*

and fiendish pride, the unhappy Earl of Glenallan; and the Black Dwarf, and his friend Habby of the Heughfoot (the cheerful hunter), and his cousin Grace Armstrong, fresh and laughing like the morning; and the *Children of the Mist*, and the baying of the bloodhound that tracks their steps at a distance (the hollow echoes are in our ears now), and Amy and her hapless love, and the villain Varney, and the deep voice of George of Douglas —and the immovable Balafré, and Master Oliver the Barber in *Quentin Durward*—and the quaint humour of the *Fortunes of Nigel*, and the comic spirit of *Peveril of the Peak*—and the fine old English romance of *Ivanhoe*. What a list of names! What a host of associations! What a thing is human life! What a power is that of genius! What a world of thought and feeling is thus rescued from oblivion! How many hours of heartfelt satisfaction has our author given to the gay and thoughtless! How many sad hearts has he soothed in pain and solitude! It is no wonder that the public repay with lengthened applause and gratitude the pleasure they receive. He writes as fast as they can read, and he does not write himself down. He is always in the public eye, and we do not tire of him. His worst is better than any other person's best. His *backgrounds* (and his later works are little else but backgrounds capitally made out) are more attractive than the principal figures and most complicated actions of other writers. His works (taken together) are almost like a new edition of human nature. This is indeed to be an author!

The political bearing of the *Scotch Novels* has been a considerable recommendation to them. They are a relief to the mind, rarefied as it has been with modern philosophy, and heated with ultra-Radicalism. At a time also when we bid fair to revive the principles of the

pictures of them while living! It is only some actual coincidence or local association that tends, without violence, to "open all the cells where memory slept." I can easily, by stooping over the long-sprent grass and clay cold clod, recall the tufts of primroses, or purple hyacinths, that formerly grew on the same spot, and cover the bushes with leaves and singing-birds, as they were eighteen summers ago; or prolonging my walk and hearing the sighing gale rustle through a tall, straight wood at the end of it, can fancy that I distinguish the cry of hounds, and the fatal group issuing from it, as in the tale of *Theodore and Honoria*. A moaning gust of wind aids the belief; I think once more to see whether the trees before me answer to the idea of the horror-stricken grove, and an air-built city towers over their grey tops.

> Of all the cities in Romanian lands,
> The chief and most renown'd Ravenna stands.[1]

I return home resolved to read the entire poem through, and, after dinner, drawing my chair to the fire, and holding a small print close to my eyes, launch into the full tide of Dryden's couplets (a stream of sound), comparing his didactic and descriptive pomp with the simple pathos and picturesque truth of Boccaccio's story, and tasting with a pleasure which none but an habitual reader can feel, some quaint examples of pronunciation in this accomplished versifier.

> Which when Honoria view'd,
> The fresh *impulse* her former fright renew'd.[1]

> And made th' *insult*, which in his grief appears,
> The means to mourn thee with my pious tears.[2]

[1] Dryden's *Theodore and Honoria*, princip.
[2] Dryden's *Sigismonda and Guiscardo*.

se trifling instances of the wavering and unsettled te of the language give double effect to the firm and ately march of the verse, and make me dwell with a rt of tender interest on the difficulties and doubts of n earlier period of literature. They pronounced words hen in a manner which we should laugh at now; and they wrote verse in a manner which we can do anything but laugh at. The pride of a new acquisition seems to give fresh confidence to it, to impel the rolling syllables through the moulds provided for them, and to overflow the envious bounds of rhyme into time-honoured triplets.

What sometimes surprises me in looking back to the past is, with the exception already stated, to find myself so little changed in the time. The same images and trains of thought stick by me: I have the same tastes, likings, sentiments, and wishes that I had then. One great ground of confidence and support has, indeed, been struck from under my feet; but I have made it up to myself by proportionable pertinacity of opinion. The ccess of the great cause, to which I had vowed myself, is to me more than all the world. I had a strength in s strength, a resource which I knew not of, till it failed ne for the second time.

> Fall'n was Glenartny's stately tree,
> Oh! ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!

It was not till I saw the axe laid to the root, that I found the full extent of what I had to lose and suffer. But my conviction of the right was only established by the triumph of the wrong, and my earliest hopes will be my last regrets. One source of this unbendingnes (which some may call obstinacy) is that, though livin much alone, I have never worshipped the Echo. I se plainly enough that black is not white, that the gra

is green, that kings are not their subjects; and, in such self-evident cases, do not think it necessary to collate my opinions with the received prejudices. In subtler questions, and matters that admit of doubt, as I do not impose my opinion on others without a reason, so I will not give up mine to them without a better reason; and a person calling me names, or giving himself airs of authority, does not convince me of his having taken more pains to find out the truth than I have, but the contrary. Mr. Gifford once said that, "while I was sitting over my gin and tobacco-pipes, I fancied myself a Leibnitz." He did not so much as know that I had ever read a metaphysical book; was I, therefore, out of complaisance or deference to him, to forget whether I had or not? Leigh Hunt is puzzled to reconcile the shyness of my pretensions with the inveteracy and sturdiness of my principles. I should have thought they were nearly the same thing. Both from disposition and habit, I can *assume* nothing in word, look, or manner. I cannot steal a march upon public opinion in any way. My standing upright, speaking loud, entering a room gracefully, proves nothing; therefore I neglect these ordinary means of recommending myself to the good graces and admiration of strangers (and, as it appears, even of philosophers and friends). Why? Because I have other resources, or, at least, am absorbed in other studies and pursuits. Suppose this absorption to be extreme, and even morbid—that I have brooded over an idea till it has become a kind of substance in my brain, that I have reasons for a thing which I have found out with much labour and pains, and to which I can scarcely do justice without the utmost violence of exertion (and that only to a few persons)—is this a reason for my playing off my out-of-the-way notions in all companies,

this a natural consequence; for how could anyone have a dramatic turn of mind who judged entirely of others from himself? Mr. Godwin might be convinced of the excellence of his work; but how could he know that others would be convinced of it, unless by supposing that they were as wise as himself, and as infallible critics of dramatic poetry—so many Aristotles sitting in judgment on Euripides! This shows why pride is connected with shyness and reserve; for the really proud have not so high an opinion of the generality as to suppose that they can understand them, or that there is any common measure between them. So Dryden exclaims of his opponents with bitter disdain—

> Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive.

I have not sought to make partisans, still less did I dream of making enemies; and have therefore kept my opinions myself, whether they were currently adopted or not. To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and it is necessary to follow, in order to lead. At the time I lived here formerly, I had no suspicion that I should ever become a voluminous writer, yet I had just the same confidence in my feelings before I had ventured to air them in public as I have now. Neither the outcry *for* or *against* moves me a jot: I do not say that the one is not more agreeable than the other.

Not far from the spot where I write, I first read Chaucer's *Flower and Leaf*, and was charmed with that young beauty, shrouded in her bower, and listening with ever-fresh delight to the repeated song of the nightingale close by her—the impression of the scene, the vernal landscape, the cool of the morning, the gushing notes of the songstress,

> And ayen methought she sung close by mine ear,

sinewy texture, have been to me in the nature of realities; and if I should not be able to add to the stock, I can live by husbanding the interest. As to my speculations, there is little to admire in them but my admiration of others; and whether they have an echo in time to come or not, I have learned to set a grateful value on the past, and am content to wind up the account of what is personal only to myself and the immediate circle of objects in which I have moved, with an act of easy oblivion,

And curtain-close such scene from every future view.

WINTERSLOW, *Feb.* 20, 1828.

LITERARY EXERCISES

## GENERAL

(a) Discuss Mr. Birrell's statement that "Hazlitt was a masterly and masterful critic."

(b) According to Mr. Waller, "It is Hazlitt's gusto that most impresses us when we read his work." What evidence of such a quality do you find in the essays included in this selection?

(c) Point out, with examples, how the author was, at times, guilty of:

(i.) Loose sentence construction.
(ii.) Unduly long sentences
(iii.) Unjustifiable ellipsis.
(iv.) Obscurity.
(v.) Incorrect use of relatives.
(vi.) Double negatives.
(vii.) Misuse of words
(viii.) Inconsistency of thought

(d) Give instances showing Hazlitt's use of:

(i.) Peculiar prepositions in certain constructions.
(ii.) Old-fashioned words
(iii.) Ineffective quotations
(iv.) The verb "to be" employed as an auxiliary in place of the verb "to have"

(e) Check each of Hazlitt's poetical quotations

## MERRY ENGLAND

(a) Do you detect any traces of national prejudice in this essay? If so, give examples.

(b) How far does Hazlitt's estimate of the English character still hold good? What factors have modified it during the last hundred years?

## ON A SUN-DIAL

Analyse the style of this essay.

## THE SICK CHAMBER

Compare this essay with one by Lamb on a similar subject.

## ON THE WANT OF MONEY

Point out how this essay reveals:

(*a*) Hazlitt's cynical humour.

(*b*) His independent spirit and hatred of patronage.

## ON PEOPLE WITH ONE IDEA

What points of resemblance do you trace between this essay and those of Steele and Addison?

## THE INDIAN JUGGLERS

(*a*) How does Hazlitt justify his admiration for intellectual, rather than bodily, accomplishments?

(*b*) To what extent do you think that Hazlitt's distinction between "cleverness" and "greatness" is sound?

## ON LIVING TO ONE'S-SELF

(*a*) What moral does Hazlitt draw in this essay?

(*b*) Does it reflect his personal experiences? Illustrate your answer.

## ON GOING A JOURNEY

(a) Do you detect any traces of misanthropy in this essay?

(b) Compare this essay with that of Stevenson on "Walking Tours."

## ON EFFEMINACY OF CHARACTER

To what celebrated author does Hazlitt refer in this essay? In what respects do you consider his judgment of this author accurate, or otherwise?

## WHY DISTANT OBJECTS PLEASE

Illustrate from this essay:

(a) The retentiveness of Hazlitt's memory.

(b) The effect his artistic training had on his critical powers.

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

On what grounds do you agree, or disagree, with Hazlitt's verdicts on the value of Scott (*a*) as a poet, (*b*) as a novelist?

## MACBETH

Summarise, and discuss, Hazlitt's criticism of this play.

## *JULIUS CÆSAR*

What does Hazlitt mean when he speaks of Shakespeare's "careless and natural digressions?" Discuss his estimate of their value.

## AS YOU LIKE IT

Criticise Hazlitt's analysis of the character of Jaques.

## OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

(*a*) To what extent are Hazlitt's predilections revealed in this essay?

(*b*) Whom would *you* wish to have seen, and why?

## ON CONSISTENCY OF OPINION

Summarise Hazlitt's opinions as to the danger of uncritical enthusiasm.

## A FAREWELL TO ESSAY-WRITING

(*a*) In this essay Hazlitt remarks that his tastes and opinions have for many years suffered little change. In which other essay does he make a similar statement, and what conclusions does he draw from the fact?

(*b*) Comment on Hazlitt's criticism of Dryden's couplets.

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on the stone at the turning to the mountain, to warn Burley that there is a lion in his path; and the fawning Claverhouse, beautiful as a panther, smooth-looking, blood-spotted; and the fanatics, Macbriar and Mucklewrath, crazed with zeal and sufferings; and the inflexible Morton, and the faithful Edith, who refused to "give her hand to another while her heart was with her lover in the deep and dead sea." And in *The Heart of Midlothian* we have Effie Deans (that sweet, faded flower) and Jeanie, her more than sister, and old David Deans, the patriarch of St. Leonard's Crags, and Butler, and Dumbiedikes, eloquent in his silence, and Mr. Bartoline Saddle-tree and his prudent helpmate, and Porteous swinging in the wind, and Madge Wildfire, full of finery and madness, and her ghastly mother.—Again, there is Meg Merrilies, standing on her rock, stretched on her bier with "her head to the east," and Dirk Hatterick (equal to Shakespeare's Master Barnardine), and Glossin, the soul of an attorney, and Dandy Dinmont, with his terrier-pack and his pony Dumple, and the fiery Colonel *Mannering, and the modish old* counsellor Pleydell, and Dominie Sampson,[1] and Rob Roy (like the eagle in his eyry), and Baillie Nicol Jarvie, and the inimitable Major Galbraith, and Rashleigh Osbaldistone, and Die Vernon, the best of secret-keepers; and in the *Antiquary*, the ingenious and abstruse Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck, and the old beadsman Edie Ochiltree, and that preternatural figure of old Edith Elspeith, a living shadow, in whom the lamp of life had been long extinguished, had it not been fed by remorse and "thick-coming" recollections; and that striking picture of the effects of feudal tyranny

[1] Perhaps the finest scene in all these novels is that where the Dominie meets his pupil, Miss Lucy, the morning after her brother's arrival.

and fiendish pride, the unhappy Earl of Glenallan; and the Black Dwarf, and his friend Habby of the Heughfoot (the cheerful hunter), and his cousin Grace Armstrong, fresh and laughing like the morning; and the *Children of the Mist*, and the baying of the bloodhound that tracks their steps at a distance (the hollow echoes are in our ears now), and Amy and her hapless love, and the villain Varney, and the deep voice of George of Douglas —and the immovable Balafré, and Master Oliver the [illegible] humour [illegible] f *Peveril* [illegible] *Ivanhoe*. What a list of names! What a host of associations! What a thing is human life! What a power is that of genius! What a world of thought and feeling is thus rescued from oblivion! How many hours of heartfelt satisfaction has our author given to the gay and thoughtless! How many sad hearts has he soothed in pain and solitude! It is no wonder that the public repay with lengthened applause and gratitude the pleasure they receive. He writes as fast as they can read, and he does not write himself down. He is always in the public eye, and we do not tire of him His worst is better than any [illegible] are more attractive than the principal figures and most complicated actions of other writers. His works (taken together) are almost like a new edition of human nature. This is indeed to be an author!

The political bearing of the *Scotch Novels* has been a considerable recommendation to them They are a relief to the mind, rarefied as it has been with modern philosophy, and heated with ultra-Radicalism. At a time also when we bid fair to revive the principles of the

Stuarts, it is interesting to bring us acquainted with their persons and misfortunes. The candour of Sir Walter's historic pen levels our bristling prejudices on this score, and sees fair-play between Roundheads and Cavaliers, between Protestant and Papist. He is a writer reconciling all the diversities of human nature to the reader. He does not enter into the distinctions of hostile sects or parties, but treats of the strength or the infirmity of the human mind, of the virtues or vices of the human breast, as they are to be found blended in the whole race of mankind. Nothing can show more handsomely or be more gallantly executed. There was a talk at one time that our author was about to take Guy Faux for the subject of one of his novels, in order to put a more liberal and humane construction on the Gunpowder Plot than our "No Popery" prejudices have hitherto permitted. Sir Walter is a professed *clarifier* of the age from the vulgar and still lurking old-English antipathy to Popery and Slavery. Through some odd process of *servile* logic, it should seem, that in restoring the claims of the Stuarts by the courtesy of romance, the House of Brunswick are more firmly seated in point of fact, and the Bourbons, by collateral reasoning, become legitimate! In any other point of view, we cannot possibly conceive how Sir Walter imagines "he has done something to revive the declining spirit of loyalty" by these novels. His loyalty is founded on *would-be* treason: he props the actual throne by the shadow of rebellion. Does he really think of making us enamoured of the "good old times" by the faithful and harrowing portraits he has drawn of them? Would he carry us back to the early stages of barbarism, of clanship, of the feudal system as "a consummation devoutly to be wished"? Is he infatuated enough, or does he so

dote and drivel over his own slothful and self-willed prejudices, *as to believe that he will make a single* convert to the beauty of Legitimacy, that is, of lawless power and savage bigotry, when he himself is obliged to apologise for the horrors he describes, and even render his descriptions credible to the modern reader by referring to the authentic history of these delectable times? [1] He is indeed so besotted as to the moral of his own story, that he has even the blindness to go out of his way to have a fling at *flints* and *dungs* (the

[1] And here we cannot but think it necessary to offer some better proof than the incidents of an idle tale, to vindicate the melancholy representation of manners which has been just laid before

[illegible]

"The description given by the author of the *Saxon Chronicle* of the cruelties exercised in the reign of King Stephen by the great barons and lords of castles, who were all Normans, affords a strong proof of the excesses of which they were capable when *their passions were inflamed* 'They *grievously oppressed* the poor people by building castles; and when they were built, they filled them with wicked men or rather devils, who seized both

contemptible ingredients, as he would have us believe, of a modern rabble) at the very time when he is describing a mob of the twelfth century—a mob (one should think) after the writer's own heart, without one particle of modern philosophy or revolutionary politics in their composition, who were to a man, to a hair, just what priests, and kings, and nobles *let* them be, and who were collected to witness (a spectacle proper to the times) the burning of the lovely Rebecca at a stake for a sorceress, because she was a Jewess, beautiful and innocent, and the consequent victim of insane bigotry and unbridled profligacy. And it is at this moment (when the heart is kindled and bursting with indignation at the revolting abuses of self-constituted power) that Sir Walter *stops the press* to have a sneer at the people, and to put a spoke (as he thinks) in the wheel of upstart innovation! This is what he "calls backing his friends" —it is thus he administers charms and philtres to our love of Legitimacy, makes us conceive a horror of all reform, civil, political, or religious, and would fain put down the *Spirit of the Age*. The author of *Waverley* might just as well get up and make a speech at a dinner at Edinburgh, abusing Mr. Mac-Adam for his improvements in the roads, on the ground that they were nearly *impassable* in many places "sixty years since"; or object to Mr. Peel's *Police Bill*, by insisting that Hounslow Heath was formerly a scene of greater interest and terror to highwaymen and travellers, and cut a greater figure in the Newgate Calendar than it does at present.—Oh! Wickliff, Luther, Hampden, Sidney, Somers, mistaken Whigs, and thoughtless Reformers in religion and politics, and all ye, whether poets or philosophers, heroes or sages, inventors of arts or sciences, patriots, benefactors of the human race, enlighteners and civilisers

of the world, who have (so far) reduced opinion to reason, and power to law, who are the cause that we no longer burn witches and heretics at slow fires, that the thumb-screws are no longer applied by ghastly, smiling judges, to extort confession of imputed crimes from sufferers for conscience sake; that men are no longer strung up like acorns on trees without judge or jury, or hunted like wild beasts through thickets and glens, who have abated the cruelty of priests, the pride of nobles, the divinity of kings in former times, to whom we owe it that we no longer wear round our necks the collar of Gurth the swineherd, and of Wamba the jester; that the castles of great lords are no longer the dens of banditti, from whence they issue with fire and sword, to lay waste the land; that we no longer expire

our wills; that no Amy Robsarts are thrown down trap-doors by Richard Varneys with impunity, that no Red Reiver of Westburn Flat sets fire to peaceful cottages; that no Claverhouse signs cold-blooded death-warrants in sport; that we have no Tristan the Hermit, or Petit-André, crawling near us, like spiders, and making our flesh creep, and our hearts sicken within us at every moment of our lives—ye who have produced this change in the face of nature and society, return to earth once more, and beg pardon of Sir Walter and his patrons, who sigh at not being able to undo all that you have done! Leaving this question, there are two other remarks which we wished to make on the Novels. The one was,

*The one . . . himself.* Scott himself wrote the greater number of these "mottos."

to express our admiration of the good-nature of the mottos, in which the author has taken occasion to remember and quote almost every living author (whether illustrious or obscure) but himself—an indirect argument in favour of the general opinion as to the source from which they spring, and the other was to hint our astonishment at the innumerable and incessant instances of bad and slovenly English in them, more, we believe, than in any other works now printed. We should think the writer could not possibly read the manuscript after he has once written it, or overlook the press.

If there were a writer, who "born for the universe"—

——Narrow'd his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind—

who, from the height of his genius looking abroad into nature, and scanning the recesses of the human heart, "winked and shut his apprehension up" to every thought or purpose that tended to the future good of mankind—who, raised by affluence, the reward of successful industry, and by the voice of fame above the want of any but the most honourable patronage, stooped to the unworthy arts of adulation, and abetted the views of the great with the pettifogging feelings of the meanest dependant on office—who, having secured the admiration of the public (with the probable reversion of immortality), showed no respect for himself, for that genius that had raised him to distinction, for that nature which he trampled under foot—who, amiable, frank, friendly, manly in private life, was seized with the dotage of age and the fury of a woman, the instant politics were concerned—who reserved all his candour and comprehensiveness of view for history, and vented his littleness, pique, resentment, bigotry, and intoler-

ance on his contemporaries—who took the wrong side, and defended it by unfair means—who, the moment his own interest or the prejudices of others interfered, seemed to forget all that was due to the pride of intellect, to the sense of manhood—who, praised, admired by men of all parties alike, repaid the public liberality by striking a secret and envenomed blow at the reputation of everyone who was not the ready tool of power—who strewed the slime of rankling malice and mercenary scorn over the bud and promise of genius, because it was not fostered in the hot-bed of corruption, or warped by the trammels of servility—who supported the worst abuses of authority in the worst spirit—who joined a gang of desperadoes to spread calumny, contempt, infamy, wherever they were merited by honesty or talent on a different side—who officiously undertook to decide public questions by private insinuations, to prop the throne by nicknames, and the altar by lies—who being (by common consent) the finest, the most humane and accomplished writer of his age, associated himself with and encouraged the lowest panders of a venal press; deluging, nauseating the public mind with the offal and garbage of Billingsgate abuse and vulgar *slang*; showing no remorse, no relenting or compassion towards the victims of this nefarious and organised system of party-proscription, carried on under the mask of literary criticism and fair discussion, insulting the misfortunes of some, and trampling on the early grave of others—

> Who would not grieve if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep if Atticus were he?

*Desperadoes.* Hazlitt, no doubt, refers here to the founders of the *Quarterly*.
*Lowest panders. Blackwood's* contributors.

But we believe there is no other age or country of the world (but ours) in which such genius could have been so degraded!

## MACBETH

> The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

*Macbeth* and *Lear*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*, are usually reckoned Shakespeare's four principal tragedies. *Lear* stands first for the profound intensity of the passion; *Macbeth* for the wildness of the imagination and the rapidity of the action; *Othello* for the progressive interest and powerful alternations of feeling; *Hamlet* for the refined development of thought and sentiment. If the force of genius shown in each of these works is astonishing, their variety is not less so. They are like different creations of the same mind, not one of which has the slightest reference to the rest. This distinctness and originality is indeed the necessary consequence of truth and nature. Shakespeare's genius alone appeared to possess the resources of nature. He is "your only *tragedy-maker*." His plays have the force of things upon the mind. What he represents is brought home to the bosom as a part of our experience, implanted in the memory as if we had known the places, persons, and things of which he treats. *Macbeth* is like a record of a preternatural and tragical event. It has the rugged severity of an old chronicle with all that the imagination of the poet can engraft upon traditional belief. The castle of Macbeth, round which "the air smells wooingly,"

and where "the temple-haunting martlet builds," has a real subsistence in the mind; the Weird Sisters meet us in person on "the blasted heath"; the "air-drawn dagger" moves slowly before our eyes; the "gracious Duncan," the "blood-boultered Banquo" stand before us; all that passed through the mind of Macbeth passes, without the loss of a tittle, through ours. All that could actually take place, and all that is only possible to be conceived, what was said and what was done, the workings of passion, the spells of magic, are brought before us with the same absolute truth and vividness — Shakespeare excelled in the openings of his plays: that

extraordinary. From the first entrance of the Witches and the description of them when they meet Macbeth,

> ——What are these
> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like the inhabitants of th' earth
> And yet are on't?

the mind is prepared for all that follows

This tragedy is alike distinguished for the lofty imagination it displays, and for the tumultuous vehemence of the action; and the one is made the moving principle of the other. The overwhelming pressure of preternatural agency urges on the tide of human passion with redoubled force. Macbeth himself appears driven along by the violence of his fate like a vessel drifting before a storm: he reels to and fro like a drunken man, he staggers under the weight of his own purposes and the suggestions of others; he stands at bay with his situation; and from the superstitious awe and breathless suspense into which the communications of the Weird

Sisters throw him, is hurried on with daring impatience to verify their predictions, and with impious and bloody hand to tear aside the veil which hides the uncertainty of the future. He is not equal to the struggle with fate and conscience. He now "bends up each corporal instrument to the terrible feat"; at other times his heart misgives him, and he is cowed and abashed by his success. "The deed, no less than the attempt, confounds him." His mind is assailed by the stings of remorse, and full of "preternatural solicitings." His speeches and soliloquies are dark riddles on human life, baffling solution, and entangling him in their labyrinths. In thought he is absent and perplexed, sudden and desperate in act, from a distrust of his own resolution. His energy springs from the anxiety and agitation of his mind. His blindly rushing forward on the objects of his ambition and revenge, or his recoiling from them, equally betrays the harassed state of his feelings.—This part of his character is admirably set off by being brought in connection with that of Lady Macbeth, whose obdurate strength of will and masculine firmness gave her the ascendency over her husband's faultering virtue. She at once seizes on the opportunity that offers for the accomplishment of all their wished-for greatness, and never flinches from her object till all is over. The magnitude of her resolution almost covers the magnitude of her guilt. She is a great bad woman, whom we hate, but whom we fear more than we hate. She does not excite our loathing and abhorrence like Regan and Goneril. She is only wicked to gain a great end; and is perhaps more distinguished by her commanding presence of mind and inexorable self-will, which do not suffer her to be diverted from a bad purpose, when once formed, by weak and womanly regrets, than by the hardness

of her heart or want of natural affections. The impression which her lofty determination of character makes on the mind of Macbeth is well described where he exclaims:

> ——Bring forth men children only;
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males!

Nor do the pains she is at to "screw his courage to the sticking-place," the reproach to him, not to be "lost so poorly in himself," the assurance that "a little water clears them of this deed," show anything but her greater consistency in depravity Her strong-nerved ambition furnishes ribs of steel to "the sides of his intent"; and she is herself wound up to the execution of her baneful project with the same unshrinking fortitude in crime, that in other circumstances she would probably have shown patience in suffering. The deliberate sacrifice of all other considerations to the gaining "for their future days and nights sole sovereign sway and masterdom," by the murder of Duncan, is gorgeously expressed in her invocation on hearing of "his fatal entrance under her battlements":

> ——Come all you spirits
>
> [illegible]
>
> To cry, hold, hold!——

When she first hears that "Duncan comes there to sleep" she is so overcome by the news, which is beyond her utmost expectations, that she answers the messenger, "Thou'rt mad to say it": and on receiving her husband's account of the predictions of the Witches, conscious of his instability of purpose, and that her presence is necessary to goad him on to the consummation of his promised greatness, she exclaims:

> ——Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
> And chastise with the valour of my tongue
> All that impedes thee from the golden round
> Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
> To have thee crowned withal.

This swelling exultation and keen spirit of triumph, this uncontroulable eagerness of anticipation, which seems to dilate her form and take possession of all her faculties, this solid, substantial flesh and blood display of passion, exhibit a striking contrast to the cold, abstracted, gratuitous, servile malignity of the Witches, who are equally instrumental in urging Macbeth to his fate for the mere love of mischief, and from a disinterested delight in deformity and cruelty. They are hags of mischief, obscene panders to iniquity, malicious from their impotence of enjoyment, enamoured of destruction, because they are themselves unreal, abortive, half-existences—who become sublime from their exemption from all human sympathies and contempt for all human affairs, as Lady Macbeth does by the force of passion! Her fault seems to have been an excess of that strong principle of self-interest and family aggrandisement, not amenable to the common feelings of compassion and justice, which is so marked a feature in barbarous nations and times. A passing reflection of this kind, on the

resemblance of the sleeping king to her father, alone prevents her from slaying Duncan with her own hand.

In speaking of the character of Lady Macbeth, we ought not to pass over Mrs. Siddons's manner of acting that part. We can conceive of nothing grander. It was something above nature. It seemed almost as if a being of a superior order had dropped from a higher sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified. In coming on in the sleeping-scene, her eyes were open, but their sense was shut. She was like a person bewildered and unconscious of what she did Her lips moved involuntarily — all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical. She glided on and off the stage like an apparition. To have seen her in that character was an event in everyone's life not to be forgotten.

The dramatic beauty of the character of Duncan, which excites the respect and pity even of his murderers, has been often pointed out. It forms a picture of itself. An instance of the author's power of giving a striking effect to a common reflection, by the manner of introducing it, occurs in a speech of Duncan, complaining of his having been deceived in his opinion of the Thane of Cawdor, at the very moment that he is expressing the most unbounded confidence in the loyalty and services of Macbeth.

> There is no art
> To find the mind's construction in the face·
> He was a gentleman, on whom I built
> An absolute trust.
> O worthiest cousin, (*addressing himself to Macbeth*)
> The sin of my Ingratitude e'en now
> Was great upon me, etc.

Another passage to show that Shakespeare lost

sight of nothing that could in any way give relief or heightening to his subject, is the conversation which takes place between Banquo and Fleance immediately before the murder-scene of Duncan.

*Banquo.* How goes the night, boy?
*Fleance.* The moon is down: I have not heard the clock.
*Banquo.* And she goes down at twelve.
*Fleance.* I take 't, 'tis later, Sir.
*Banquo.* Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heav'n,
Their candles are all out.—
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep: Merciful Powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose.

In like manner, a fine idea is given of the gloomy coming on of evening, just as Banquo is going to be assassinated.

Light thickens and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood.

. . . . .

Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn.

*Macbeth* (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespeare's plays. It moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other. There is nothing but what has a violent end or violent beginnings. The lights and shades are laid on with a determined hand; the transitions from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death, are sudden and startling; every passion brings

in its fellow-contrary, and the thoughts pitch and jostle against each other as in the dark. The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespeare's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. This circumstance will account for the abruptness and violent antitheses of the style, the throes and labour which run through the expression, and from defects will turn them into beauties. "So fair and foul a day I have not seen," etc. "Such welcome and unwelcome news together." "Men's lives are like the flowers in their caps, dying or ere they sicken." "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it." The scene before the castle-gate follows the appearance of the Witches on the heath, and is followed by a midnight murder. Duncan is cut off betimes by treason leagued with witchcraft, and Macduff is taken untimely from his mother's womb to avenge his death. Macbeth, after the death of Banquo, wishes for his presence in extravagant terms, "To him and all we thirst," and when his ghost appears, cries out, "Avaunt and quit my sight," and being gone, he is "himself again" Macbeth resolves to get rid of Macduff, that "he may sleep in spite of thunder"; and cheers his wife on the doubtful intelligence of Banquo's taking-off with the encouragement—"Then be thou jocund; ere the bat has flown his cloistered flight; ere to black Hecate's summons the shard-born beetle has rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done—a deed of dreadful note." In Lady Macbeth's speech, "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done 't," there is murder and filial piety together; and in urging him to fulfil his vengeance against the defenceless king, her thoughts spare the blood neither of infants nor old age The description of

the Witches is full of the same contradictory principle; they "rejoice when good kings bleed," they are neither of the earth nor the air, but both; they "should be women but their beards forbid it"; they take all the pains possible to lead Macbeth on to the height of his ambition, only to betray him "in deeper consequence," and after showing him all the pomp of their art, discover their malignant delight in his disappointed hopes, by that bitter taunt, "Why stands Macbeth thus amazedly?" We might multiply such instances everywhere.

The leading features in the character of Macbeth are striking enough, and they form what may be thought, at first, only a bold, rude, Gothic outline. By comparing it with other characters of the same author we shall perceive the absolute truth and identity which is observed in the midst of the giddy whirl and rapid career of events. Macbeth in Shakespeare no more loses his identity of character in the fluctuations of fortune or the storm of passion, than Macbeth in himself would have lost the identity of his person. Thus he is as distinct a being from Richard III. as it is possible to imagine, though these two characters in common hands, and indeed in the hands of any other poet, would have been a repetition of the same general idea, more or less exaggerated. For both are tyrants, usurpers, murderers, both aspiring and ambitious, both courageous, cruel, treacherous. But Richard is cruel from nature and constitution. Macbeth becomes so from accidental circumstances. Richard is from his birth deformed in body and mind, and naturally incapable of good. Macbeth is full of "the milk of human kindness," is frank, sociable, generous. He is tempted to the commission of guilt by golden opportunities, by the instigations of his wife,

and by prophetic warnings. Fate and metaphysical aid conspire against his virtue and his loyalty. Richard on the contrary needs no prompter, but wades through a series of crimes to the height of his ambition from the ungovernable violence of his temper and a reckless love of mischief. He is never gay but in the prospect or in the success of his villainies: Macbeth is full of horror at the thoughts of the murder of Duncan, which he is with difficulty prevailed on to commit, and of remorse after its perpetration. Richard has no mixture of common humanity in his composition, no regard to kindred or posterity, he owns no fellowship with others, he is "himself alone." Macbeth is not destitute of feelings of sympathy, is accessible to pity, is even made in some measure the dupe of his uxoriousness, ranks the loss of friends, of the cordial love of his followers, and of his good name, among the causes which have made him weary of life, and regrets that he has ever seized the crown by unjust means, since he cannot transmit it to his posterity—

> For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind—
> For them the gracious Duncan have I murther'd,
> To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings

In the agitation of his mind, he envies those whom he has sent to peace. "Duncan is in his grave; after life's fitful fever he sleeps well."—It is true he becomes more callous as he plunges deeper in guilt; "direness is thus rendered familiar to his slaughterous thoughts," and he in the end anticipates his wife in the boldness and bloodiness of his enterprises, while she for want of the same stimulus of action, "is troubled with thick-coming fancies that rob her of her rest," goes mad and dies. Macbeth endeavours to escape from reflection on his

crimes by repelling their consequences, and banishes remorse for the past by the meditation of future mischief. This is not the principle of Richard's cruelty, which displays the wanton malice of a fiend as much as the frailty of human passion. Macbeth is goaded on to acts of violence and retaliation by necessity; to Richard, blood is a pastime.—There are other decisive differences inherent in the two characters. Richard may be regarded as a man of the world, a plotting, hardened knave, wholly regardless of everything but his own ends, and the means to secure them.—Not so Macbeth. The superstitions of the age, the rude state of society, the local scenery and customs, all give a wildness and imaginary grandeur to his character. From the strangeness of the events that surround him, he is full of amazement and fear; and stands in doubt between the world of reality and the world of fancy. He sees sights not shown to mortal eye, and hears unearthly music. All is tumult and disorder within and without his mind; his purposes recoil upon himself, are broken and disjointed; he is the double thrall of his passions and his evil destiny. Richard is not a character either of imagination or pathos, but of pure self-will. There is no conflict of opposite feelings in his breast. The apparitions which he sees only haunt him in his sleep; nor does he live like Macbeth in a waking dream. Macbeth has considerable energy and manliness of character; but then he is "subject to all the skyey influences." He is sure of nothing but the present moment. Richard in the busy turbulence of his projects never loses his self-possession, and makes use of every circumstance that happens as an instrument of his long-reaching designs. In his last extremity we can only regard him as a wild beast taken in the toils: while we never entirely lose our concern

for Macbeth; and he calls back all our sympathy by that fine close of thoughtful melancholy—

[illegible]

[illegible]
Would fain deny, and dare not.

We can conceive a common actor to play Richard tolerably well; we can conceive no one to play Macbeth properly, or to look like a man that had encountered the Weird Sisters. All the actors that we have ever seen appear as if they had encountered them on the boards of Covent Garden or Drury Lane, but not on the heath at Forres, and as if they did not believe what they had seen. The Witches of *Macbeth*, indeed, are ridiculous on the modern stage, and we doubt if the Furies of Æschylus would be more respected. The progress of manners and knowledge has an influence on the stage, and will in time perhaps destroy both tragedy and comedy. Filch's picking pockets in the *Beggar's Opera* is not so good a jest as it used to be: by the force of the police and of philosophy, Lillo's murders and the ghosts in Shakespeare will become obsolete. At last, there will be nothing left, good nor bad, to be desired or dreaded, on the theatre or in real life.—A question has been started with respect to the originality of Shakespeare's Witches, which has been well answered by Mr. Lamb in his notes to the *Specimens of Early Dramatic Poetry*:

Though some resemblance may be traced between the charms in *Macbeth*, and the incantations in this play (*The Witch of Middleton*), which is supposed to have preceded

*Lillo's murders*. In the *Fatal Curiosity* and *George Barwell* by George Lillo (1693–1739)

it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakespeare. His Witches are distinguished from the Witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These Witches can hurt the body; those have power over the soul.—Hecate in Middleton has a son, a low buffoon: the hags of Shakespeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them.—Except Hecate, they have no names, which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties which Middleton has given to his hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth. But, in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They raise jars, jealousies, strifes, *like a thick scurf o'er life.*

## JULIUS CÆSAR

*Julius Cæsar* was one of three principal plays by different authors, pitched upon by the celebrated Earl of Hallifax to be brought out in a splendid manner by subscription, in the year 1707. The other two were the *King and No King* of Fletcher, and Dryden's *Maiden Queen*. There perhaps might be political reasons for this selection, as far as regards our author. Otherwise,

Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* is not equal as a whole to either of his other plays taken from the Roman history. It is inferior in interest to *Coriolanus*, and both in interest and power to *Antony and Cleopatra*. It however abounds in admirable and affecting passages, and is remarkable for the profound knowledge of character, in which Shakespeare could scarcely fail. If there is any exception to this remark, it is in the hero of the piece himself. We do not much admire the representation here given of Julius Cæsar, nor do we think it answers to the portrait given of him in his *Commentaries*. He makes several vapouring and rather pedantic speeches, and does nothing. Indeed, he has nothing to do. So far, the fault of the character is the fault of the plot.

The spirit with which the poet has entered at once into the manners of the common people, and the jealousies and heart-burnings of the different factions, is shown in the first scene, where Flavius and Marullus, tribunes of the people, and some citizens of Rome, appear upon the stage.

*Flavius* Thou art a cobbler, art thou?
*Cobbler*. Truly, Sir, *all* that I live by, is the *awl*· I meddle with no tradesman's matters, nor woman's matters, but *with-al*, I am indeed, Sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I recover them.
*Flavius*. But wherefore art not in thy shop to-day? Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?
*Cobbler*. Truly, Sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work. But, indeed, Sir, we make holiday to see Cæsar, and rejoice in his triumph

To this specimen of quaint low humour immediately follows that unexpected and animated burst of indignant eloquence, put into the mouth of one of the angry tribunes.

*Marullus.* Wherefore rejoice!—What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive-bonds his chariot-wheels?
Oh you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome!
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The live-long day with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath his banks
To hear the replication of your sounds,
Made in his concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now cull out an holiday?
And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Begone——
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the Gods to intermit the plague,
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

The well-known dialogue between Brutus and Cassius, in which the latter breaks the design of the conspiracy to the former, and partly gains him over to it, is a noble piece of high-minded declamation. Cassius's insisting on the pretended effeminacy of Cæsar's character, and his description of their swimming across the Tiber together, "once upon a raw and gusty day," are among the finest strokes in it. But perhaps the whole is not equal to the short scene which follows, when Cæsar enters with his train:

*Brutus.* The games are done, and Cæsar is returning.
*Cassius.* As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve,
And he will, after his sour fashion, tell you
What has proceeded worthy note to-day.
*Brutus.* I will do so; but look you, Cassius—

The angry spot doth glow on Cæsar's brow,
And all the rest look like a chidden train.
Calphurnia's cheek is pale, and Cicero
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes,
As we have seen him in the Capitol,
Being crost in conference by some senators.
*Cassius.* Casca will tell us what the matter is.
*Cæsar.* Antonius——
*Antony.* Cæsar?
*Cæsar.* Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights:
Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look,
He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.
*Antony.* Fear him not, Cæsar, he's not dangerous:
He is a noble Roman, and well given.
*Cæsar.* Would he were fatter; but I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer; and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men. He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music.
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit,
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing
Such men as he be never at heart's ease,
Whilst they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Cæsar
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him.

We know hardly any passage more expressive of the genius of Shakespeare than this It is as if he had been actually present, had known the different characters and what they thought of one another, and had taken down what he heard and saw, their looks, words, and gestures, just as they happened.

The character of Mark Antony is farther speculated

upon where the conspirators deliberate whether he shall fall with Cæsar. Brutus is against it:

> And for Mark Antony, think not of him:
> For he can do no more than Cæsar's arm,
> When Cæsar's head is off.
> *Cassius.* Yet I do fear him:
> For in th' ingrafted love he bears to Cæsar——
> *Brutus.* Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him:
> If he love Cæsar, all that he can do
> Is to himself, take thought, and die for Cæsar:
> And that were much he should; for he is giv'n
> To sports, to wildness, and much company.
> *Trebonius.* There is no fear in him; let him not die:
> For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter.

They were in the wrong; and Cassius was right.

The honest manliness of Brutus is however sufficient to find out the unfitness of Cicero to be included in their enterprise, from his affected egotism and literary vanity.

> O, name him not: let us not break with him;
> For he will never follow anything,
> That other men begin.

His scepticism as to prodigies and his moralising on the weather—"This disturbed sky is not to walk in"—are in the same spirit of refined imbecility.

Shakespeare has in this play and elsewhere shown the same penetration into political character and the springs of public events as into those of every-day life. For instance, the whole design of the conspirators to liberate their country fails from the generous temper and overweening confidence of Brutus in the goodness of their cause and the assistance of others. Thus it has always been. Those who mean well themselves think well of others, and fall a prey to their security. That humanity and honesty which dispose men to resist injustice and tyranny render them unfit to cope with the cunning and power of those who are opposed to

them. The friends of liberty trust to the professions of others, because they are themselves sincere, and endeavour to reconcile the public good with the least possible hurt to its enemies, who have no regard to anything but their own unprincipled ends, and stick at nothing to accomplish them. Cassius was better cut out for a conspirator. His heart prompted his head. His watchful jealousy made him fear the worst that might happen, and his irritability of temper added to his inveteracy of purpose, and sharpened his patriotism. The mixed nature of his motives made him fitter to contend with bad men. The vices are never so well employed as in combating one another. Tyranny and servility are to be dealt with after their own fashion: otherwise, they will triumph over those who spare them, and finally pronounce their funeral panegyric, as Antony did that of Brutus.

The quarrel between Brutus and Cassius is managed in a masterly way. The dramatic fluctuation of passion, the calmness of Brutus, the heat of Cassius, are admirably described; and the exclamation of Cassius on hearing of the death of Portia, which he does not learn till after their reconciliation, "How 'scaped I killing when I crost you so?" gives double force to all that has gone before. The scene between Brutus and Portia, where she endeavours to extort the secret of the conspiracy from him, is conceived in the most heroical spirit, and the burst of tenderness in Brutus—

> You are my true and honourable wife,
> As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
> That visit my sad heart—

is justified by her whole behaviour. Portia's breathless impatience to learn the event of the conspiracy, in the dialogue with Lucius, is full of passion. The interest which Portia takes in Brutus and that which Calphurnia takes in the fate of Cæsar are discriminated with the nicest precision. Mark Antony's speech over the dead body of Cæsar has been justly admired for the mixture of pathos and artifice in it: that of Brutus certainly is not so good.

The entrance of the conspirators to the house of Brutus at midnight is rendered very impressive. In the midst of this scene, we meet with one of those careless and natural digressions which occur so frequently and beautifully in Shakespeare. After Cassius has introduced his friends one by one, Brutus says:

> They are all welcome.
> What watchful cares do interpose themselves
> Betwixt your eyes and night?
> *Cassius.* Shall I entreat a word? [*They whisper.*
> *Decius.* Here lies the east: doth not the day break here?
> *Casca.* No.
> *Cinna.* O pardon, Sir, it doth; and yon grey lines,
> That fret the clouds, are messengers of day.
> *Casca.* You shall confess, that you are both deceiv'd:
> Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,
> Which is a great way growing on the south,
> Weighing the youthful season of the year.
> Some two months hence, up higher toward the north
> He first presents his fire, and the high east
> Stands as the Capitol, directly here.

We cannot help thinking this graceful familiarity better than all the fustian in the world.—The truth of history in *Julius Cæsar* is very ably worked up with dramatic effect. The councils of generals, the doubtful turns of battles, are represented to the life. The death of Brutus is worthy of him—it has the dignity of the Roman

senator with the firmness of the Stoic philosopher. But what is perhaps better than either, is the little incident of his boy, Lucius, falling asleep over his instrument, as he is playing to his master in his tent, the night [illegible]

[illegible]

Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

## AS YOU LIKE IT

SHAKESPEARE has here converted the forest of Arden into another Arcadia, where they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." It is the most ideal of any of this author's plays. It is a pastoral drama, in which the interest arises more out of the sentiments and characters than out of the actions or situations. It is not what is done, but what is said, that claims our attention. Nursed in solitude, "under the shade of melancholy boughs," the imagination grows soft and delicate, and the wit runs riot in idleness, like a spoiled child, that is never sent to school. Caprice and fancy reign and revel here, and stern necessity is banished to the court. The mild sentiments of humanity are strengthened with thought and leisure; the echo of the cares and noise of the world strikes upon the ear "of those who have felt them knowingly," softened by

time and distance. "They hear the tumult, and are still." The very air of the place seems to breathe a spirit of philosophical poetry: to stir the thoughts, to touch the heart with pity, as the drowsy forest rustles to the sighing gale. Never was there such beautiful moralising, equally free from pedantry or petulance.

> And this their life, exempt from public haunts,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

Jaques is the only purely contemplative character in Shakespeare. He thinks, and does nothing. His whole occupation is to amuse his mind, and he is totally regardless of his body and his fortunes. He is the prince of philosophical idlers; his only passion is thought; he sets no value upon anything but as it serves as food for reflection. He can "suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs"; the motley fool, "who morals on the time," is the greatest prize he meets with in the forest. He resents Orlando's passion for Rosalind as some disparagement of his own passion for abstract truth; and leaves the Duke, as soon as he is restored to his sovereignty, to seek his brother out who has quitted it, and turned hermit.

> ——Out of these convertites
> There is much matter to be heard and learnt.

Within the sequestered and romantic glades of the forest of Arden, they find leisure to be good and wise, or to play the fool and fall in love. Rosalind's character is made up of sportive gaiety and natural tenderness: her tongue runs the faster to conceal the pressure at her heart. She talks herself out of breath, only to get deeper in love. The coquetry with which she plays with her lover in the double character which she has to support

is managed with the nicest address. How full of voluble, laughing grace is all her conversation with Orlando—

> ——In heedless mazes running
> With wanton haste and giddy cunning

How full of real fondness and pretended cruelty is her answer to him when he promises to love her "For ever and a day"!

> Say a day without the ever: no, no, Orlando, men are April
>
> [illegible]
>
> a hyen, and that when you are inclined to sleep
> *Orlando* But will my Rosalind do so?
> *Rosalind* By my life she will do as I do

The silent and retired character of Celia is a necessary relief to the provoking loquacity of Rosalind, nor can anything be better conceived or more beautifully described than the mutual affection between the two cousins:

> [illegible]

The unrequited love of Silvius for Phebe shows the perversity of this passion in the commonest scenes of life, and the rubs and stops which nature throws in its way, where fortune has placed none Touchstone is not in love, but he will have a mistress as a subject for the exercise of his grotesque humour, and to show his contempt for the passion by his indifference about the

person. He is a rare fellow. He is a mixture of the ancient cynic philosopher with the modern buffoon, and turns folly into wit, and wit into folly, just as the fit takes him. His courtship of Audrey not only throws a degree of ridicule on the state of wedlock itself, but he is equally an enemy to the prejudices of opinion in other respects. The lofty tone of enthusiasm which the Duke and his companions in exile spread over the stillness and solitude of a country life, receives a pleasant shock from Touchstone's sceptical determination of the question.

> *Corin.* And how like you this shepherd's life, Mr. Touchstone?
> *Clown.* Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach.

Zimmerman's celebrated work on Solitude discovers only *half* the sense of this passage.

There is hardly any of Shakespeare's plays that contains a greater number of passages that have been quoted in books of extracts, or a greater number of phrases that have become in a manner proverbial. If we were to give all the striking passages, we should give half the play. We will only recall a few of the most delightful to the reader's recollection. Such are the meeting between Orlando and Adam; the exquisite appeal of Orlando to the humanity of the Duke and his company to supply him with food for the old man; and their answer; the Duke's description of a country life, and the account of Jaques moralising on the wounded

*Zimmerman's.* Johann von Zimmermann (1728–95), German physician and author.

deer; his meeting with Touchstone in the forest; his apology for his own melancholy and his satirical vein, and the well-known speech on the stages of human life; the old song of "Blow, blow, thou winter's wind"; Rosalind's description of the marks of a lover and of the progress of time with different persons; the picture of the snake wreathed round Oliver's neck while the lioness watches her sleeping prey; and Touchstone's lecture to the shepherd and panegyric on the virtues of "an If."—All of these are familiar to the reader: there is one passage of equal delicacy and beauty which may have escaped him, and with it we shall close our account of *As You Like It*. It is Phebe's description of Ganimed at the end of the third act

ce

I have more cause to hate him than to love him,
For what had he to do to chide at me?

## OF PERSONS ONE WOULD WISH TO HAVE SEEN

Come like shadows—so depart.

LAMB it was, I think, who suggested this subject, as well as the defence of Guy Faux, which I urged him to execute. As, however, he would undertake neither, I suppose I must do both, a task for which he would have been much fitter, no less from the temerity than the felicity of his pen—

> Never so sure our rapture to create
> As when it touch'd the brink of all we hate.

Compared with him, I shall, I fear, make but a commonplace piece of business of it; but I should be loth the idea was entirely lost, and besides I may avail myself of some hints of his in the progress of it. I am sometimes, I suspect, a better reporter of the ideas of other people than expounder of my own. I pursue the one too far into paradox or mysticism; the others I am not bound to follow farther than I like, or than seems fair and reasonable.

On the question being started, Ayrton said, "I suppose the two first persons you would choose to see would be the two greatest names in English literature, Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Locke?" In this Ayrton, as usual, reckoned without his host. Everyone burst out a-laughing at the expression of Lamb's face, in which impatience was restrained by courtesy. "Yes, the

*Of Persons . . . seen.* This conversation is supposed to have taken place at 16, Mitre Court Buildings.

*Guy Faux.* See Hazlitt's essay on this subject.

*Ayrton.* William Ayrton, musician (1777–1858).

greatest names," he stammered out hastily, "but they were not persons—not persons."—"Not persons?" said Ayrton, looking wise and foolish at the same time, afraid his triumph might be premature. "That is," rejoined Lamb, "not characters, you know. By Mr. Locke and Sir Isaac Newton, you mean the *Essay on the Human Understanding*, and the *Principia*, which we have to this day. Beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men. But what we want to see anyone *bodily* for, is when there is something peculiar, striking in the individuals, more than we can learn from their writings, and yet are curious to know. I dare say Locke and Newton were very like Kneller's portraits of them. But who could paint Shakespeare?"—"Ay," retorted Ayrton, "there it is, then I suppose you would prefer seeing him and Milton instead?"—"No," said Lamb, "neither. I have seen so much of Shakespeare on the stage and on bookstalls, in frontispieces and on mantel-pieces, that I am quite tired of the everlasting repetition: and as to Milton's face, the impressions that have come down to us of it I do not like; it is too starched and Puritanical; and I should be afraid of losing some of the manna of his poetry in the leaven of his countenance and the precisian's band and gown."—"I shall guess no more," said Ayrton. "Who is it, then, you would like to see 'in his habit as he lived,' if you had your choice of the whole range of English literature?" Lamb then named Sir Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville, the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, as the two worthies whom he should feel the greatest pleasure to encounter on the floor of his apartment in their nightgown and slippers, and to exchange friendly greeting with them. At this Ayrton laughed outright, and conceived Lamb was jesting with him,

but as no one followed his example, he thought there might be something in it, and waited for an explanation in a state of whimsical suspense. Lamb then (as well as I can remember a conversation that passed twenty years ago—how time slips!) went on as follows: "The reason why I pitch upon these two authors is, that their writings are *riddles*, and *they* themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles; and I should like to ask them the meaning of what no mortal but themselves, I should suppose, can fathom. There is Dr. Johnson: I have no curiosity, no strange uncertainty about him; he and Boswell together have pretty well let me into the secret of what passed through his mind. He and other writers like him are sufficiently explicit: my friends whose repose I should be tempted to disturb (were it in my power) are implicit, inextricable, inscrutable.

"When I look at that obscure but gorgeous prose composition, the *Urn-burial*, I seem to myself to look into a deep abyss, at the bottom of which are hid pearls and rich treasure; or it is like a stately labyrinth of doubt and withering speculation, and I would invoke the spirit of the author to lead me through it. Besides, who would not be curious to see the lineaments of a man who, having himself been twice married, wished that mankind were propagated like trees! As to Fulke Greville, he is like nothing but one of his own 'Prologues spoken by the ghost of an old king of Ormus,' a truly formidable and inviting personage: his style is apocalyptical, cabalistical, a knot worthy of such an apparition to untie; and for the unravelling a passage or two, I would stand the brunt of an encounter with so portentous

*Urn-burial*. By Sir Thomas Browne, mentioned above.

a commentator!"—"I am afraid, in that case," said Ayrton, "that if the mystery were once cleared up, the merit might be lost"; and turning to me, whispered a friendly apprehension, that while Lamb continued to admire these old crabbed authors, he would never become a popular writer. Dr Donne was mentioned as a writer of the same period, with a very interesting countenance, whose history was singular, and whose meaning was often quite as *uncomeatable*, without a personal citation from the dead, as that of any of his contemporaries. The volume was produced; and while someone was expatiating on the exquisite simplicity and beauty of the portrait prefixed to the old edition, Ayrton got hold of the poetry, and exclaiming, "What have we here?" read the following:

> Here lies a She-Sun and a He-Moon there—
> She gives the best light to his sphear,
> Or each is both, and all, and so
> They unto one another nothing owe

There was no resisting this, till Lamb, seizing the volume, turned to the beautiful *Lines to his Mistress*, dissuading her from accompanying him abroad, and read them with suffused features and a faltering tongue:

Be my true mistris still, not my faign'd Page;
I'll goe, and, by thy kinde leave, leave behinde
Thee! onely worthy to nurse in my minde.
Thirst to come backe; O, if thou die before,
My soule, from other lands to thee shall soare.
Thy (else almighty) beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love.
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshnesse; thou hast reade
How roughly hee in pieces shivered
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he lov'd.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madnesse to have prov'd
Dangers unurg'd: Feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one in th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy; nor change
Thy bodie's habite, nor minde; be not strange
To thyeselfe onely. All will spie in thy face
A blushing, womanly, discovering grace.
Richly-cloath'd apes are call'd apes, and as soone
Eclips'd as bright, we call the moone the moon.
Men of France, changeable camelions,
Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee . . .
O stay here! for thee
England is onely a worthy gallerie,
To walke in expectation; till from thence
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dreame me some happinesse,
Nor let thy lookes our long-hid love confesse,
Nor praise, nor dispraise me; nor blesse, nor curse
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight's startings, crying out, Oh, oh,
Nurse, oh, my love is slaine, I saw him goe
O'er the white Alpes alone; I saw him, I,
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.
Augure me better chance, except dread Jove
Thinke it enough for me to have had thy love.

Someone then inquired of Lamb if we could not see from the window the Temple Walk in which Chaucer used to take his exercise; and on his name being put

to the vote, I was pleased to find that there was a general sensation in his favour in all but Ayrton, who said something about the ruggedness of the metre, and even objected to the quaintness of the orthography. I was vexed at this superficial gloss, pertinaciously reducing everything to its own trite level, and asked "if he did not think it would be worth while to scan the eye that had first greeted the Muse in that dim twilight and early dawn of English literature; to see the head round which the visions of fancy must have played like gleams of inspiration or a sudden glory; to watch those lips that 'lisped in numbers, for the numbers came'—as by a miracle, or as if the dumb should speak? Nor was it alone that he had been the first to tune his native tongue (however imperfectly to modern ears); but he was himself a noble, manly character, standing before his age and striving to advance it; a pleasant humorist withal, who has not only handed down to us the living manners of his time, but had, no doubt, store of curious and quaint devices, and would make as hearty a companion as mine Host of the Tabard. His interview with Petrarch is fraught with interest. Yet I would rather have seen Chaucer in company with the author of the *Decameron*, and have heard them exchange their best stories together—the *Squire's Tale* against the *Story of the Falcon*, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* against the *Adventures of Friar Albert*. How fine to see the high mysterious brow which learning then wore, relieved by the gay, familiar tone of men of the world, and by the courtesies of genius! Surely, the thoughts and feelings which passed through the minds of these great revivers of learning,

*Interview with Petrarch* It is possible, but not certain, that Chaucer met Petrarch (1304–1374) and Boccaccio (1313–1375) in Italy.

these Cadmuses who sowed the teeth of letters, must have stamped an expression on their features as different from the moderns as their books, and *well worth the perusal*. Dante," I continued, "is as interesting a person as his own Ugolino, one whose lineaments curiosity would as eagerly devour in order to penetrate his spirit, and the only one of the Italian poets I should care much to see. There is a fine portrait of Ariosto by *no* less a hand than Titian's; light, Moorish, spirited, but not answering our idea. The same artist's large colossal profile of Peter Aretine is the only likeness of the kind that has the effect of conversing with 'the mighty dead'; and this is truly spectral, ghastly, necromantic." Lamb put it to me if I should like to see Spenser as well as Chaucer; and I answered, without hesitation, "No; for that his beauties were ideal, visionary, not palpable or personal, and therefore connected with less curiosity about the man. His poetry was the essence of romance, a very halo round the bright orb of fancy; and the bringing in the individual might dissolve the charm. No tones of voice could come up to the mellifluous cadence of his verse; no form but of a winged angel could vie with the airy shapes he has described. He was (to my apprehension) rather a 'creature of the element, that lived in the rainbow and played in the plighted clouds,' than an ordinary mortal. Or if he did appear, I should wish it to be as a mere vision, like one of his own pageants, and that he should pass by unquestioned like a dream or sound—

——*That* was Arion crown'd:
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain."

*Portrait of Ariosto.* Possibly the portrait in the National Gallery, ascribed to Palma.

*Peter Aretine* (1492–1557), called "The Scourge of Princes," from the little satires he wrote on contemporary sovereigns.

Captain Burney muttered something about Columbus, and Martin Burney hinted at the Wandering Jew; but the last was set aside as spurious, and the first made over to the New World.

"I should like," said Mrs. Reynolds, "to have seen Pope talk with Patty Blount; and I *have* seen Goldsmith." Everyone turned round to look at Mrs Reynolds, as if by so doing they could get a sight at Goldsmith.

"Where," asked a harsh, croaking voice, "was Dr. Johnson in the years 1745-6? He did not write anything that we know of, nor is there any account of him in Boswell during those two years. Was he in Scotland with the Pretender? He seems to have passed through the scenes in the Highlands in company with Boswell, many years after, 'with lack-lustre eye,' yet as if they were familiar to him, or associated in his mind with interests that he durst not explain. If so, it would be an additional reason for my liking him, and I would give something to have seen him seated in the tent with the youthful Majesty of Britain, and penning the Proclamation to all true subjects and adherents of the [illegible]

"I [illegible] on Lamb, [illegible]"—"Not like Pope! My dear sir, you must be under a mistake—I can read him over and over for ever!"—"Why, certainly, the *Essay on Man* must be allowed to be a masterpiece."—"It may be so, but I seldom look into it."—"Oh! then it's his Satires you admire?"—"No, not his Satires, but his friendly Epistles and his

*Captain Burney* and *Martin Burney* Members of the Burney family to which Frances Burney belonged.
*Mrs. Reynolds.* Lamb's schoolmistress.
*Harsh, croaking voice.* Cannot be identified

compliments."—"Compliments! I did not know he ever made any."—"The finest," said Lamb, "that were ever paid by the wit of man. Each of them is worth an estate for life—nay, is an immortality. There is that superb one to Lord Cornbury:

Despise low joys, low gains;
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains;
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains.

Was there ever more artful insinuation of idolatrous praise? And then that noble apotheosis of his friend Lord Mansfield (however little deserved), when, speaking of the House of Lords, he adds:

Conspicuous scene! another yet is nigh,
(More silent far) where kings and poets lie;
Where Murray (long enough his country's pride)
Shall be no more than Tully or than Hyde.

And with what a fine turn of indignant flattery he addresses Lord Bolingbroke:

Why rail they then, if but one wreath of mine,
Oh! all-accomplish'd St. John, deck thy shrine?

Or turn," continued Lamb, with a slight hectic on his cheek and his eye glistening, "to his list of early friends:

But why then publish? Granville the polite,
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise,
And Congreve loved, and Swift endured my lays:
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield read,
Ev'n mitred Rochester would nod the head;
And St. John's self (great Dryden's friend before)
Received with open arms one poet more.
Happy my studies, if by these approved!
Happier their author, if by these beloved!
From these the world will judge of men and books,
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cooks."

*Lord Mansfield* (1705–93). Lord Chief Justice of England. He attacked the liberty of the Press, for which he was roughly handled in the *Letters of Junius*.

Here his voice totally failed him, and throwing down the book, he said, "Do you think I would not wish to have been friends with such a man as this?"

"What say you to Dryden?"—"He rather made a show of himself, and courted popularity in that lowest temple of fame, a coffee-shop, so as in some measure to vulgarise one's idea of him. Pope, on the contrary, reached the very *beau ideal* of what a poet's life should be; and his fame while living seemed to be an emanation from that which was to circle his name after death. He was so far enviable (and one would feel proud to have witnessed the rare spectacle in him) that he was almost the only poet and man of genius who met with his reward on this side of the tomb, who realised in friends, fortune, the esteem of the world, the most sanguine hopes of a youthful ambition, and who found that sort of patronage from the great during his lifetime which they would be thought anxious to bestow upon him after his death. Read Gay's verses to him on his supposed return from Greece, after his translation of Homer was finished, and say if you would not gladly join the bright procession that welcomed him home, or see it once more land at Whitehall Stairs."—"Still," said Mrs Reynolds, "I would rather have seen him talking with Patty Blount, or riding by in a coronet-coach with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu!"

Erasmus Phillips, who was deep in a game of piquet at the other end of the room, whispered to Martin Burney to ask if Junius would not be a fit person to invoke from the dead. "Yes," said Lamb, "provided he would agree to lay aside his mask."

We were now at a stand for a short time, when

*Erasmus Phillips.* One of Lamb's friends
*Stand* Standstill

Fielding was mentioned as a candidate; only one, however, seconded the proposition. "Richardson?"—"By all means, but only to look at him through the glass door of his back shop, hard at work upon one of his novels (the most extraordinary contrast that ever was presented between an author and his works); not to let him come behind his counter, lest he should want you to turn customer, or to go upstairs with him, lest he should offer to read the first manuscript of *Sir Charles Grandison*, which was originally written in eight-and-twenty volumes octavo, or get out the letters of his female correspondents, to prove that *Joseph Andrews* was low."

There was but one statesman in the whole of English history that anyone expressed the least desire to see —Oliver Cromwell, with his fine, frank, rough, pimply face, and wily policy; and one enthusiast, John Bunyan, the immortal author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It seemed that if he came into the room, dreams would follow him, and that each person would nod under his golden cloud, "nigh-sphered in heaven," a canopy as strange and stately as any in Homer.

Of all persons near our own time, Garrick's name was received with the greatest enthusiasm, who was proposed by Barron Field. He presently superseded both Hogarth and Handel, who had been talked of, but then it was on condition that he should act in tragedy and comedy, in the play and the farce, Lear and Wildair and Abel Drugger. What a *sight for sore eyes* that would be! Who would not part with a year's income at least, almost with a year of his natural life, to be present at it? Besides, as he could not act alone, and recitations are unsatisfactory things, what a troop he must bring with him—the silver-tongued Barry, and Quin, and Shuter

and Weston, and Mrs Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, of whom I have heard my father speak as so great a favourite when he was young This would indeed be a revival of the dead, the restoring of art; and so much the more desirable, as such is the lurking scepticism mingled with our overstrained admiration of past excellence, that though we have the speeches of Burke, the portraits of Reynolds, the writings of Goldsmith, and the conversation of Johnson, to show what people could do at that period, and to confirm the universal testimony to the merits of Garrick; yet, as it was before our time, we have our misgivings, as if he was probably, after all, little better than a Bartlemy-fair actor, dressed out to play Macbeth in a scarlet coat and laced cocked-hat. For one, I should like to have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears. Certainly, by all accounts, if anyone was ever moved by the true histrionic *æstus*, it was Garrick. When he followed the Ghost in *Hamlet*, he did not drop the sword, as most actors do, behind the scenes, but kept the point raised the whole way round, so fully was he possessed with the idea, or so anxious not to lose sight of his part for a moment Once at a splendid dinner-party at Lord ——'s, they suddenly missed Garrick, and could not imagine what was become of him, till they were drawn to the window by the convulsive screams and peals of laughter of a young negro boy, who was rolling on the ground in an ecstasy of delight to see Garrick mimicking a turkey-cock in the court-yard, with his coat-tail stuck out behind, and in a seeming flutter of feathered rage and pride Of our party only two persons present had seen the British Roscius and they seemed as willing as the rest to renew their acquaintance with their old favourite.

*Æstus* Ardour, spirit.

We were interrupted in the hey-day and mid-career of this fanciful speculation by a *grumbler in a corner*, who declared it was a shame to make all this rout about a mere player and farce-writer, to the neglect and exclusion of the fine old dramatists, the contemporaries and rivals of Shakespeare. Lamb said he had anticipated this objection when he had named the author of *Mustapha* and *Alaham*; and, out of caprice, insisted upon keeping him to represent the set, in preference to the wild, hare-brained enthusiast, Kit Marlowe; to the sexton of St. Ann's, Webster, with his melancholy yew-trees and death's-heads; to Decker, who was but a garrulous proser; to the voluminous Heywood; and even to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom we might offend by complimenting the wrong author on their joint productions. Lord Brooke, on the contrary, stood quite by himself, or, in Cowley's words, was "a vast species alone." Someone hinted at the circumstance of his being a lord, which rather startled Lamb, but he said a *ghost* would perhaps dispense with strict etiquette, on being regularly addressed by his title. Ben Jonson divided our suffrages pretty equally. Some were afraid he would begin to traduce Shakespeare, who was not present to defend himself. "If he grows disagreeable," it was whispered aloud, "there is Godwin can match him." At length, his romantic visit to Drummond of Hawthornden was mentioned, and turned the scale in his favour.

Lamb inquired if there was anyone that was hanged that I would choose to mention? And I answered, Eugene Aram. The name of the "Admirable Crichton" was suddenly started as a splendid example of *waste* talents, so different from the generality of his countrymen. This choice was mightily approved by a North-Briton present, who declared himself descended from

that prodigy of learning and accomplishment, and said he had family plate in his possession as vouchers for the fact, with the initials A. C.—*Admirable Crichton*! Hunt laughed, or rather roared, as heartily at this as I should think he has done for many years.

The last-named Mitre-courtier[1] then wished to know whether there were any metaphysicians to whom one might be tempted to apply the wizard spell? I replied, there were only six in modern times deserving the name —Hobbes, Berkeley, Butler, Hartley, Hume, Leibnitz; and perhaps Jonathan Edwards, a Massachusetts man.[2] As to the French, who talked fluently of having *created* this science, there was not a tittle in any of their writings that was not to be found literally in the authors I had mentioned. [Horne Tooke, who might have a claim to come in under the head of Grammar, was still living.] None of these names seemed to excite much interest, and I did not plead for the re-appearance of those who might be thought best fitted by the abstracted nature of their studies for their present spiritual and disembodied state, and who, even while on this living stage, were nearly divested of common flesh and blood. As Ayrton, with an uneasy, fidgety face, was about to put some question about Mr Locke and Dugald Stewart, he was

[1] Lamb at this time occupied chambers in Mitre Court, Temple.

[2] Bacon is not included in this list, nor do I know where he should come in. It is not easy to make room for him and his reputation together. This great and celebrated man in some of his works recommends one to pour a bottle of claret into the ground of a morning, and to stand over it, inhaling the per fumes. So he sometimes enriched the dry and barren soil o speculation with the fine aromatic spirit of his genius. Hi *Essays* and his *Advancement of Learning* are works of vast dept and scope of observation. The last, though it contains no positiv discoveries, is a noble chart of the human intellect, and a gui to all future inquirers

prevented by Martin Burney, who observed, "If J—— was here, he would undoubtedly be for having up those profound and redoubted scholiasts, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus." I said this might be fair enough in him who had read, or fancied he had read, the original works, but I did not see how we could have any right to call up these authors to give an account of themselves in person, till we had looked into their writings.

By this time it should seem that some rumour of our whimsical deliberation had got wind, and had disturbed the *irritabile genus* in their shadowy abodes, for we received messages from several candidates that we had just been thinking of. Gray declined our invitation, though he had not yet been asked: Gay offered to come, and bring in his hand the Duchess of Bolton, the original Polly: Steele and Addison left their cards as Captain Sentry and Sir Roger de Coverley: Swift came in and sat down without speaking a word, and quitted the room as abruptly: Otway and Chatterton were seen lingering on the opposite side of the Styx, but could not muster enough between them to pay Charon his fare: Thomson fell asleep in the boat, and was rowed back again; and Burns sent a low fellow, one John Barleycorn, an old companion of his, who had conducted him to the other world, to say that he had during his lifetime been drawn out of his retirement as a show, only to be made an excise-man of, and that he would rather remain where he was. He desired, however, to shake hands by his representative—the hand, thus held out, was in a burning fever, and shook prodigiously.

The room was hung round with several portraits of eminent painters. While we were debating whether we should demand speech with these masters of mute eloquence, whose features were so familiar to us, it

ted that all at once they glided from their frames, seated themselves at some little distance from us. re was Leonardo, with his majestic beard and watch-eye, having a bust of Archimedes before him; next was Raphael's graceful head turned round to the rnarina; and on his other side was Lucretia Borgia, th calm, golden locks; Michael Angelo had placed the odel of St. Peter's on the table before him; Correggio ad an angel at his side; Titian was seated with his istress between himself and Giorgione; Guido was ccompanied by his own Aurora, who took a dice-box rom him; Claude held a mirror in his hand; Rubens patted a beautiful panther (led in by a satyr) on the head; Vandyke appeared as his own Paris, and Rem-brandt was hid under furs, gold chains, and jewels, which Sir Joshua eyed closely, holding his hand so as to shade his forehead. Not a word was spoken; and as we rose to do them homage, they still presented the same surface to the view. Not being *bona-fide* representations of living people, we got rid of the splendid apparitions by signs and dumb show. As soon as they had melted into thin air, there was a loud noise at the outer door, and we found it was Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio, who had been raised from the dead by their earnest desire to see their illustrious successors—

> Whose names on earth
> In Fame's eternal records live for aye!

Finding them gone, they had no ambition to be seen after them, and mournfully withdrew "Egad!" said Lamb, "those are the very fellows I should like to have

*Fornarina.* A baker's wife, whose portrait Raphael painted. *Guido . . . Aurora* A reference to the picture by Guido Reni, in which Aurora is represented as a goddess riding in a charic

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such names as Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Tamerlane, or Ghengis Khan?"—"Excuse me," said Lamb; "on the subject of characters in active life, plotters and disturbers of the world, I have a crotchet of my own, which I beg leave to reserve"—"No, no! come, out with your worthies!"—"What do you think of Guy Faux and Judas Iscariot?" Hunt turned an eye upon him like a wild Indian, but cordial and full of smothered glee. "Your most exquisite reason!" was echoed on all sides; and Ayrton thought that Lamb had now fairly entangled himself. "Why, I cannot but think," retorted he of the wistful countenance, "that Guy Faux, that poor, fluttering annual scarecrow of straw and rags, is an ill-used gentleman. I would give something to see him sitting pale and emaciated, surrounded by his matches and his barrels of gunpowder, and expecting the moment that was to transport him to Paradise for his heroic self-devotion; but if I say any more, there is

I have no conception of such a thing; nor have I ever seen any picture (not even Leonardo's very fine one) that gave me the least idea of it."—"You have said enough, Mr. Lamb, to justify your choice."

"Oh! ever right, Menenius—ever right!"

"There is only one other person I can ever think of after this," continued Lamb; but without mentioning a name that once put on a semblance of mortality. "If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come

*Leonardo's very fine one*, "The Last Supper" It adorns a convent in Milan.

into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment!"

As a lady present seemed now to get uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken, we rose up to go. The morning broke with *that dim, dubious light by which* Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandaio must have seen to paint their earliest works; and we parted to meet again and renew similar topics at night, the next night, and the night after that, till that night overspread Europe which saw no dawn. The same event, in truth, broke up our little Congress that broke up the great one. But that was to meet again: our deliberations have never been resumed.

## ON CONSISTENCY OF OPINION

——Servetur ad imum
Qualis ab inceptu processerit, et sibi constet.

Many people boast of being masters in their own house. I pretend to be master of my own mind. I should be sorry to have an ejectment served upon me for any notions I may choose to entertain there. Within that little circle I would fain be an absolute monarch. I do not profess the spirit of martyrdom; I have no ambition to march to the stake, or up to a masked battery, in defence of an hypothesis: I do not court the rack: I do not wish to be flayed alive for affirming that two and two make four, or any other intricate proposition: I am shy of bodily pains and penalties, which some are fond of—imprisonment, fine, banishment, confiscation of goods: but if I do not prefer the independence of my

*Servetur ad imum, etc.* Let him continue, right through, as he began, and be consistent.

mind to that of my body, I at least prefer it to everything else. I would avoid the arm of power, as I would escape from the fangs of a wild beast: but as to the opinion of the world, I see nothing formidable in it. "It is the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil." I am not to be browbeat or wheedled out of any of my settled convictions. Opinion to opinion, I will face any man. Prejudice, fashion, the cant of the moment, go for nothing; and as for the reason of the thing, it can only be supposed to rest with me or another, in proportion to the pains we have taken to ascertain it. Where the pursuit of truth has been the habitual study of any man's life, the love of truth will be his ruling passion. "Where the treasure is, there the heart is also." Everyone is most tenacious of that to which he owes his distinction from others. Kings love power, misers gold, women flattery, poets reputation — and philosophers truth, when they can find it. They are right in cherishing the only privilege they inherit. If "to be wise were to be obstinate," I might set up for as great a philosopher as the best of them; for some of my conclusions are as fixed and as incorrigible to proof as need be. I am attached to them in consequence of the pains, and anxiety, and the waste of time they have cost me. In fact, I should not well know what to do without them at this time of day, nor how to get others to supply their place. I would quarrel with the best friend I have sooner than acknowledge the absolute right of the Bourbons. I see Mr. Northcote seldomer than I did, because I cannot agree with him about the *Catalogue Raisonné*. I remember once saying to this gentleman, a

*Mr. Northcote . . Raisonné.* James Northcote (1746–1831), portrait painter and writer on art. He is said to have told Haydon that he was delighted with the *Catalogue*.

great while ago, that I did not seem to have altered any of my ideas since I was sixteen years old. "Why then," said he, "you are no wiser now than you were then!" I might make the same confession, and the same retort would apply still. Coleridge used to tell me, that this pertinacity was owing to a want of sympathy with others. What he calls *sympathising with others* is their admiring him; and it must be admitted that he varies his battery pretty often, in order to accommodate himself to this sort of mutual understanding. But I do not agree in what he says of me. On the other hand, I think that it is my sympathising *beforehand* with the different views and feelings that may be entertained on a subject, that prevents me retracting my judgment, and flinging myself into the contrary extreme *afterwards*. If you proscribe all opinion opposite to your own, and impertinently exclude all the evidence that does not make for you, it stares you in the face with double force when it breaks in unexpectedly upon you, or if at any subsequent period it happens to suit your interest or convenience to listen to objections which vanity or prudence had hitherto overlooked. But if you are aware from the first suggestion of a subject, either by subtlety, or tact, or close attention, of the full force of what others possibly feel and think of it, you are not exposed to the same vacillation of opinion. The number of grains and scruples, of doubts and difficulties, thrown into the scale while the balance is yet undecided, add to the weight and steadiness of the determination. He who anticipates his opponent's arguments, confirms while he corrects his own reasonings. When a question has been carefully examined in all its bearings, and a principle is once established, it is not liable to be overthrown by any new facts which have been arbitrarily

and petulantly set aside, nor by every wind of idle doctrine rushing into the interstices of a hollow speculation, shattering it in pieces, and leaving it a mockery and a bye-word; like those tall, gawky, staring, pyramidal erections which are seen scattered over different parts of the country, and are called the *Follies* of different gentlemen! A man may be confident in maintaining a side, as he has been cautious in choosing it. If after making up his mind strongly in one way, to the best of his capacity and judgment, he feels himself inclined to a very violent revulsion of sentiment, he may generally rest assured that the change is in himself and his motives, not in the reason of things.

I cannot say that, from my own experience, I have found that the persons most remarkable for sudden and violent changes of principle have been cast in the softest or most susceptible mould. All their notions have been exclusive, bigoted, and intolerant Their want of consistency and moderation has been in exact proportion to their want of candour and comprehensiveness of mind. Instead of being the creatures of sympathy, open to conviction, unwilling to give offence by the smallest difference of sentiment, they have (for the most part) been made up of mere antipathies—a very repulsive sort of personages—at odds with themselves, and with everybody else. The slenderness of their pretensions to philosophical inquiry has been accompanied with the

[illegible]

at a time, and whichever they pleased. There is a story somewhere in *Don Quixote*, of two champions coming to a shield hung up against a tree with an inscription written on each side of it. Each of them maintained

that the words were what was written on the side next him, and never dreamt, till the fray was over, that they might be different on the opposite side of the shield. It would have been a little more extraordinary if the combatants had changed sides in the heat of the scuffle, and stoutly denied that there were any such words on the opposite side as they had before been bent on sacrificing their lives to prove were the only ones it contained. Yet such is the very situation of some of our modern polemics. They have been of all sides of the question, and yet they cannot conceive how an honest man can be of any but one—that which they hold at present. It seems that they are afraid to look their old opinions in the face, lest they should be fascinated by them once more. They banish all doubts of their own sincerity by inveighing against the motives of their antagonists. There is no salvation out of the pale of their strange inconsistency. They reduce common sense and probity to the straitest possible limits—the breasts of themselves and their patrons. They are like people out at sea on a very narrow plank, who try to push everybody else off. Is it that they have so little faith in the course to which they have become such staunch converts, as to suppose that, should they allow a grain of sense to their old allies and new antagonists, they will have more than they? Is it that they have so little consciousness of their own disinterestedness, that they feel, if they allow a particle of honesty to those who now differ with them, they will have more than they? Those opinions must needs be of a very fragile texture which will not stand the shock of the least acknowledged opposition, and which lay claim to respectability by stigmatising all who do not hold them as "sots, and knaves, and cowards." There is a want of well-balanced

about with him, or be haunted in the persons of others with, the phantoms of his altered principles to loathe and execrate them. He need not (as it were) pass an act of attainder on all his thoughts, hopes, wishes, from youth upwards, to offer them at the shrine of matured servility: he need not become one vile antithesis, a living and ignominious satire on himself.

A gentleman went to live, some years ago, in a remote part of the country, and as he did not wish to affect singularity, he used to have two candles on his table of an evening. A romantic acquaintance of his in the neighbourhood, smit with the love of simplicity and equality, used to come in, and without ceremony snuff one of them out, saying, it was a shame to indulge in such extravagance while many poor cottagers had not even a rushlight to see to do their evening's work by. This might be about the year 1802, and was passed over as among the ordinary occurrences of the day. In 1816 (oh! fearful lapse of time, pregnant with strange mutability) the same enthusiastic lover of economy, and hater of luxury, asked his thoughtless friend to dine with him in company with a certain lord, and to lend him his man-servant to wait at table; and just before they were sitting down to dinner, he heard him say to the servant in a sonorous whisper—"and be sure you don't forget to have six candles on the table"! Extremes meet. The event here was as true to itself as the oscillation of the pendulum. My informant, who understands moral equations, had looked for this reaction, and noted it down as characteristic. The impertinence in the first instance was the cue to the ostentatious servility in the second. The one was the fulfilment of the other, like the type and anti-type of a prophecy. No—the keeping of the character at the end

*of fourteen years was as unique as the keeping of the* thought to the end of the fourteen lines of a sonnet! Would it sound strange if I were to whisper it in the reader's ear, that it was the same person who was thus anxious to see six candles on the table to receive a lord, who once (in ages past) said to me, that "he saw nothing to admire in the eloquence of such men as Mansfield and Chatham, and what did it all end in, but their being made lords?" It is better to be a lord than a lacquey to a lord! So we see that the swelling pride and preposterous self-opinion which exalts itself above the mightiest, looking down upon and braving the boasted pretensions of the highest rank and the most brilliant talents as nothing, compared with its own conscious powers and silent unmoved self-respect, grovels and licks the dust before titled wealth, like a lacquered slave, the moment it can get wages and a livery! Would Milton or Marvell have done this?

Mr. Coleridge, indeed, sets down this outrageous want of keeping to an excess of sympathy, and there is, after all, some truth in his suggestion. There is a craving after the approbation and concurrence of others natural to the mind of man. It is difficult to sustain the weight of an opinion singly for any length of way. The intellect languishes without cordial encouragement and support. It exhausts both strength and patience to be always striving against the stream. *Contra audentior ito* is the motto but of few. Public opinion is always pressing upon the mind, and, like the air we breathe, acts unseen, unfelt. It supplies the living current of our thoughts and infects without our knowledge. It taints the blood, and is taken into the smallest pores. The most sanguine constitutions are, perhaps, the most exposed to its

*Contra audentior ito* Go more and more boldly forwards.

influence. But public opinion has its source in power, in popular prejudice, and is not always in accord with right reason, or a high and abstracted imagination. Which path to follow where the two roads part? The heroic and romantic resolution prevails at first in high and heroic tempers. They think to scale the heights of truth and virtue at once with him "whose genius had angelic wings, and fed on manna,"—but after a time find themselves baffled, toiling on in an uphill road, without friends, in a cold neighbourhood, without aid or prospect of success. The poet

Like a worm goes by the way.

He hears murmurs loud or suppressed, meets blank looks or scowling faces, is exposed to the pelting of the pitiless press, and is stunned by the shout of the mob, that gather round him to see what sort of a creature a poet and a philosopher is. What is there to make him proof against all this? A strength of understanding steeled against temptation, and a dear love of truth that smiles opinion to scorn. These he perhaps has not. A lord passes in his coach. Might he not get up, and ride out of the reach of the rabble-rout? He is invited to stop dinner. If he stays he might insinuate some wholesome truths. He drinks in rank poison—flattery! He recites some verses to the ladies, who smile delicious praise, and thank him through their tears. The master of the house suggests a happy allusion in the turn of an expression. "There's sympathy." This is better than the company he lately left. Pictures, statues meet his raptured eye. Our Ulysses finds himself in the gardens of Alcinous: our truant is fairly caught. He wanders

*Alcinous.* A king, mentioned in the *Odyssey* as having beautiful gardens in his island kingdom of Scheria.

through enchanted ground. Groves, classic groves, nod unto him, and he hears "ancestral voices" hailing him as brother bard! He sleeps, dreams, and wakes cured of his thriftless prejudices and morose philanthropy. He likes this courtly and popular sympathy better. "He looks up with awe to kings; with honour to nobility; with reverence to magistrates," etc. He no longer breathes the air of heaven and his own thoughts, but is steeped in that of palaces and courts, and finds it agree better with his constitutional temperament. Oh! how sympathy alters a man from what he was!

> I've heard of hearts unkind,
> Kind deeds with cold returning:
> Alas! the gratitude of man
> Has oftener set me mourning

A spirit of contradiction, a wish to monopolise all wisdom, will not account for uniform consistency, for [illegible] than acquiesce in what others approve it will change sides in a day. It is offended at every resistance to its [illegible] all his talent for disputation with him, sharpened by rage and disappointment. A man, to be steady in a cause, should be more attached to the truth than to the acquiescence of his fellow-citizens.

I can hardly consider Mr. Coleridge a deserter from

*He . . . kings.* An allusion to Coleridge's *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

the cause he first espoused, unless one could tell what cause he ever heartily espoused, or what party he ever belonged to, in downright earnest. He has not been inconsistent with himself at different times, but at all times. He is a sophist, a casuist, a rhetorician, what you please, and might have argued or declaimed to the end of his breath on one side of a question or another, but he never was a pragmatical fellow. He lived in a round of contradictions, and never came to a settled point. His fancy gave the cue to his judgment, and his vanity set his invention afloat in whatever direction he could find most scope for it, or most *sympathy*, that is, admiration. His Life and Opinions might naturally receive the title of one of Hume's Essays—*A Sceptical Solution of Sceptical Doubts*. To be sure, his *Watchman* and his *Friend* breathe a somewhat different tone on subjects of a particular description, both of them apparently pretty high-raised, but whoever will be at the pains to examine them closely, will find them to be *voluntaries*, fugues, solemn capriccios, not set compositions with any malice prepense in them, or much practical meaning. I believe some of his friends, who were indebted to him for the suggestion of plausible reasons for conformity, and an opening to a more qualified view of the letter of their paradoxical principles, have lately disgusted him by the virulence and extravagance to which they have carried hints, of which he never suspected that they would make the least possible use. But if Mr. Coleridge is satisfied with the wandering Moods of his Mind, perhaps this is no reason that others may not reap the solid benefit. He himself is like the idle sea-weed on the ocean, tossed from shore to shore: they are like barnacles fastened to the vessel of state, rotting its goodly timbers!

There are some persons who are of too fastidious a turn of mind to like anything long, or to assent twice to the same opinion. —— always sets himself to prop the falling cause, to nurse the rickety bantling. He takes the part which he thinks in most need of his support, not so much out of magnanimity, as to prevent too great a degree of presumption or self-complacency on the triumphant side. "Though truth be truth, yet he contrives to throw such changes of vexation on it as it may lose some colour." I have been delighted to hear him expatiate with the most natural and affecting simplicity on a favourite passage or picture, and all the while afraid of agreeing with him, lest he should instantly turn round and unsay all that he had said, for fear of my going away with too good an opinion of my own taste, *or too great an admiration of my idol*—and his own. I dare not ask his opinion twice, if I have got a favourable sentence once, lest he should belie his own sentiments to stagger mine I have heard him talk divinely (like one inspired) of Boccaccio, and the story of the Pot of Basil, describing "how it grew, and it grew, and it grew," till you saw it spread its tender leaves in the light of his eye, and wave in the tremulous sound of his voice, and yet if you asked him about it another time, he would, perhaps, affect to think little of it, or to have forgotten the circumstance. His enthusiasm is fickle and treacherous. The instant he finds it shared in common, he backs out of it His enmity is equally refined, but hardly so unsocial His exquisitely-turned invectives display all the beauty of scorn, and impart elegance to vulgarity. He sometimes finds out minute excellences, and cries up one thing to put you out of conceit with another. If you want him to praise Sir Joshua *con amore*, in his best manner, you should

begin with saying something about Titian—if you seem an idoliser of Sir Joshua, he will immediately turn off the discourse, gliding like the serpent before Eve, wary and beautiful, to the graces of Sir Peter Lely, or ask if you saw a Vandyke the other day which he does not think Sir Joshua could stand near. But find fault with the Lake Poets, and mention some pretended patron of rising genius, and you need not fear but he will join in with you and go all lengths that you can wish him. You may calculate upon him there. "Pride elevates, and joy brightens his face." And, indeed, so eloquent is he, and so beautiful in his eloquence, that I myself, with all my freedom from gall and bitterness, could listen to him untired, and without knowing how the time went, losing and neglecting many a meal and hour,

——From morn to noon,
From noon to dewy eve, a summer's day.

When I cease to hear him quite, other tongues, turned to what accents they may of praise or blame, would sound dull, ungrateful, out of tune, and harsh, in the comparison.

An overstrained enthusiasm produces a capriciousness in taste, as well as too much indifference. A person who sets no bounds to his admiration takes a surfeit of his favourites. He overdoes the thing. He gets sick of his own everlasting praises and affected raptures. His preferences are a great deal too violent to last. He wears out an author in a week, that might last him a year, or his life, by the eagerness with which he devours him. Every such favourite is in his turn the greatest writer in the world. Compared with the lord of the ascendent for the time being, Shakespeare is commonplace, and Milton a pedant, a little insipid or so. Some of these

prodigies require to be dragged out of their lurking-places, and cried up to the top of the compass; their traits are subtle, and must be violently obtruded on the sight. But the effort of exaggerated praise, though it may stagger others, tires the maker, and we hear of them no more after a while. Others take their turns,

. . . . . . . .

It is a pity thus to outlive our admiration, and exhaust our relish of what is excellent. Actors and actresses are disposed of in the same conclusive peremptory way: some of them are talked of for months, nay, years, then it is almost an offence to mention them. Friends, acquaintance, go the same road: are now asked to come six days in the week, then warned against coming the seventh. The smallest faults are soon magnified in those we think too highly of: but where shall we find perfection? If we will put up with nothing short of that, we shall have neither pictures, books, nor friends left—we shall have nothing but our own absurdities to keep company with! "In all things a regular and moderate indulgence is the best security for a lasting enjoyment."

There are numbers who judge by the event, and change with fortune. They extol the hero of the day, and join the prevailing clamour, whatever it is; so that the fluctuating state of public opinion regulates their feverish, restless enthusiasm, like a thermometer. They blow hot or cold, according as the wind sets favourably or otherwise. With such people the only infallible test of merit is success; and no arguments are true that have not a large or powerful majority on their side. They go by appearances. Their vanity, not the truth, is their

ruling object. They are not the last to quit a falling cause, and they are the first to hail the rising sun. Their minds want sincerity, modesty, and keeping. With them—

> ——To have done is to hang
> Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
> In monumental mockery.

They still, "with one consent, praise new-born gauds," and Fame, as they construe it, is

> ——Like a fashionable host,
> That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand;
> And with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly,
> Grasps the in-comer. Welcome ever smiles,
> And Farewell goes out sighing.

Such servile flatterers made an idol of Buonaparte while fortune smiled upon him, but when it left him they removed him from his pedestal in the cabinet of their vanity, as we take down the picture of a relation that has died without naming us in his will. The opinion of such triflers is worth nothing; it is merely an echo. We do not want to be told the event of a question, but the rights of it. Truth is in their theory nothing but "noise and inexplicable dumb show." They are the heralds, outriders, and trumpeters in the procession of fame; are more loud and boisterous than the rest, and give themselves great airs, as the avowed patrons and admirers of genius and merit. As there are many who change their sentiments with circumstances (as they decided lawsuits in Rabelais with the dice), so there are others who change them with their acquaintance. "Tell me your company, and I'll tell you your opinions," might be said to many a man who piques himself on a select and superior view of things, distinct from the vulgar. Individuals of this class are quick and versatile, but they are not beforehand with opinion. They catch

it, when it is pointed out to them, and take it at the rebound, instead of giving the first impulse. Their minds are a light, luxuriant soil, into which thoughts are easily transplanted, and shoot up with uncommon sprightliness and vigour. They wear the dress of other people's minds very gracefully and unconsciously. They tell you your own opinion, or very gravely repeat an observation you have made to them about half a year afterwards. They let you into the delicacies and luxuries of Spenser with great disinterestedness, in return for your having introduced that author to their notice. They prefer West to Raphael, Stothard to Rubens, till they are told better. Still they are acute in the main, and good judges in their way. By trying to improve their tastes, and reform their notions according to an ideal standard, they perhaps spoil and muddle their native faculties, rather than do them any good. Their first manner is their best, because it is the most natural It is well not to go out of ourselves, and to be contented to take up with what we are, for better for worse. We can neither beg, borrow, nor steal characteristic excellences. Some views and modes of thinking suit certain minds, as certain colours suit certain complexions. We may part with very shining and very useful qualities, without getting better ones to supply them. Mocking is catching only in regard to defects. Mimicry is always dangerous.

It is not necessary to change our road in order to advance on our journey. We should cultivate the spot of ground we possess to the utmost of our power, though it may be circumscribed and comparatively barren. *A rolling stone gathers no moss.* People may collect all the wisdom they will ever attain quite as well by staying at home as by travelling abroad. There is no

me the robin-redbreast, pecking the crumbs at the door, or warbling on the leafless spray, the same glancing form that has followed me wherever I have been, and "done its spiriting gently"; or the rich notes of the thrush that startle the ear of winter, and seem to have drunk up the full draught of joy from the very sense of contrast. To these I adhere, and am faithful, for they are true to me; and, dear in themselves, are dearer for the sake of what is departed, leading me back (by the hand) to that dreaming world, in the innocence of which they sat and made sweet music, waking the promise of future years, and answered by the eager throbbings of my own breast. But now "the credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er," and I turn back from the world that has deceived me, to nature that lent it a false beauty, and that keeps up the illusion of the past. As I quaff my libations of tea in a morning, I love to watch the clouds sailing from the west, and fancy that "the spring comes slowly up this way." In this hope, while "fields are dank and ways are mire," I follow the same direction to a neighbouring wood, where, having gained the dry, level greensward, I can see my way for a mile before me, closed in on each side by copse-wood, and ending in a point of light more or less brilliant, as the day is bright or cloudy. What a walk is this to me! I have no need of book or companion—the days, the hours, the thoughts of my youth are at my side, and blend with the air that fans my cheek. Here I can saunter for hours, bending my eye forward, stopping and turning to look back, thinking to strike off into some less trodden path, yet hesitating to quit the one I am in, afraid to snap the brittle threads of memory. I remark the shining trunks and slender branches of the birch-trees, waving in the idle breeze; or a pheasant springs up on whirring wing;

or I recall the spot where I once found a wood-pigeon at the foot of a tree, weltering in its gore, and think how many seasons have flown since "it left its little life in air." Dates, names, faces come back—to what purpose? Or why think of them now? Or rather, why not think of them oftener? We walk through life, as through a narrow path, with a thin curtain drawn around it; behind are ranged rich portraits, airy harps are strung —yet we will not stretch forth our hands and lift aside the veil, to catch glimpses of the one, or sweep the chords of the other. As in a theatre, when the old-fashioned green curtain drew up, groups of figures, fantastic dresses, laughing faces, rich banquets, stately columns, gleaming vistas appeared beyond, so we have only at any time to "peep through the blanket of the past," to possess ourselves at once of all that has regaled our senses, that is stored up in our memory, that has struck our fancy, that has pierced our hearts:—yet to all this we are indifferent, insensible, and seem intent only on the present vexation, the future disappointment. If there is a Titian hanging up in the room with me, I scarcely regard it: how then should I be expected to strain the mental eye so far, or to throw down, by the magic spells of the will, the stone walls that enclose it in the Louvre? There is one head there of which I have often thought, when looking at it, that nothing should ever disturb me again, and I would become the character it represents—such perfect calmness and self-possession reigns in it! Why do I not hang an image of this in some dusky corner of my brain, and turn an eye upon it ever and anon, as I have need of some such talisman to calm my troubled thoughts? The attempt is fruitless, if not natural; or, like that of the French, to hang garlands on the grave, and to conjure back the dead by miniature

pictures of them while living! It is only some actual coincidence or local association that tends, without violence, to "open all the cells where memory slept." I can easily, by stooping over the long-sprent grass and clay cold clod, recall the tufts of primroses, or purple hyacinths, that formerly grew on the same spot, and cover the bushes with leaves and singing-birds, as they were eighteen summers ago; or prolonging my walk and hearing the sighing gale rustle through a tall, straight wood at the end of it, can fancy that I distinguish the cry of hounds, and the fatal group issuing from it, as in the tale of *Theodore and Honoria*. A moaning gust of wind aids the belief; I think once more to see whether the trees before me answer to the idea of the horror-stricken grove, and an air-built city towers over their grey tops.

> Of all the cities in Romanian lands,
> The chief and most renown'd Ravenna stands.[1]

I return home resolved to read the entire poem through, and, after dinner, drawing my chair to the fire, and holding a small print close to my eyes, launch into the full tide of Dryden's couplets (a stream of sound), comparing his didactic and descriptive pomp with the simple pathos and picturesque truth of Boccaccio's story, and tasting with a pleasure which none but an habitual reader can feel, some quaint examples of pronunciation in this accomplished versifier.

> Which when Honoria view'd,
> The fresh *impulse* her former fright renew'd.[1]

> And made th' *insult*, which in his grief appears,
> The means to mourn thee with my pious tears.[2]

[1] Dryden's *Theodore and Honoria*, princip.
[2] Dryden's *Sigismonda and Guiscardo*.

These trifling instances of the wavering and unsettled state of the language give double effect to the firm and stately march of the verse, and make me dwell with a sort of tender interest on the difficulties and doubts of an earlier period of literature. They pronounced words then in a manner which we should laugh at now; and they wrote verse in a manner which we can do anything but laugh at. The pride of a new acquisition seems to give fresh confidence to it; to impel the rolling syllables through the moulds provided for them, and to overflow the envious bounds of rhyme into time-honoured triplets.

What sometimes surprises me in looking back to the past is, with the exception already stated, to find myself so little changed in the time. The same images and trains of thought stick by me: I have the same tastes, likings, sentiments, and wishes that I had then. One great ground of confidence and support has, indeed, been struck from under my feet; but I have made it up to myself by proportionable pertinacity of opinion The success of the great cause, to which I had vowed myself, was to me more than all the world: I had a strength in its strength, a resource which I knew not of, till it failed me for the second time.

> Fall'n was Glenartny's stately tree,
> Oh! ne'er to see Lord Ronald more!

It was not till I saw the axe laid to the root, that I found the full extent of what I had to lose and suffer. But my conviction of the right was only established by the triumph of the wrong; and my earliest hopes will be my last regrets. One source of this unbendingness (which some may call obstinacy) is that, though living much alone, I have never worshipped the Echo. I see plainly enough that black is not white, that the gras